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Recovering the Historicity of the Ideological Production of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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Many of Sor Juana's recent critics don't hesitate to categorize her work as early feminist writing, depicting her as a subversive visionary, a woman truly ahead of her time. Critical analyses of her work have often tended to emphasize Sor Juana's marginality highlighting her status as an illegitimate child, an unmarried woman dedicated to her studies, a defender of secular notions in a dangerously religious context, and a defender of women in a patriarchal world. The present discussion, however, represents an effort to resist the temptation to overly modernize Sor Juana; instead of understanding her life as an anomaly, this project takes up the task of explaining the productive logic of Sor Juana's writing as a historically anchored phenomenon. Aided by the notion of the radical historicity of textual production as developed by Spanish scholar, Juan Carlos Rodríguez, this project undertakes to explore the specific radical historicity of Sor Juana's work. The aim is to locate her textual production with respect to the contradictory ideologies present in 17th century Spain and New Spain during the period of the transition between feudalism and capitalism. The textual analysis presented examines the intersection of resurgent feudal and emerging bourgeois ideologies in Sor Juana's *Respuesta* written to the Bishop of Puebla, as well as in a number of her poems, two of her plays and a letter she wrote to her confessor, Núñez de Miranda. Recognizing that women's bodies represent a specific site for the historical struggle between two distinct modes of production, this project also analyzes the ideological extraction of Sor Juana's particular defense of women as she responds to the heightened suppression of women that marked the period. After tracing the specific notion of sexual difference that appears in Sor Juana's texts as well as her ideological integration of the new structure of the public/private split, the analysis concludes that Sor Juana's defense of women was not anomalous to its moment of production and that her standard classification as feminist should be reconsidered.

Dedication Page

For Koldo, with whom I hope to read volumes.

Table of Contents

Preface: A Way In: Breaking with Subjectivity

The object of study selected for this project is the written work of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651-1695), a now famous nun who was born in San Miguel Nepantla, New Spain, a town near to what is today Mexico City. Given the extensive number of publications already available on this topic, one might justifiably ask, what, if anything is there left to say about Sor Juana? It is by now common knowledge, at least within the field of Hispanism, that Sor Juana is regarded as an early champion of feminist ideals and as such is a particularly useful figure for coursework or research on the topic of women's history. In this sense, her work is infused with contemporary social and political relevance even in spite of the three and a half centuries that have passed since she signed her letter to the Bishop of Puebla. Sor Juana's place in the literary canon has been well established over the last fifty odd years as well as the basic narrative that categorizes her as a visionary and historical anomaly. The present study, however, represents an inquiry regarding the historical accuracy of the version of Sor Juana's life that has emerged within the context of literary criticism and questions, in particular, the ways that her work has been interpreted according to modern ideological notions and values.

If one goal of this project is to critique and expand constructively upon the already immense body of work written about Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, a second, but equally important aim is to make a contribution to the larger project of developing a historical materialist theory of literary production. In the case of this analysis, the intimate relationship between political position and theoretical problematic is conscious and intentional. This discussion is perhaps somewhat different from others in that it begins by underscoring the radically historical and ideological function of literary criticism and the fact that the scholarly interpretation of literary works is inevitably political in nature given that such readings always serve to legitimize specific socio-historical categories. In opening the discussion with a short detour into the political/theoretical nature of this research project, the goal of this preface is to call the reader's attention to specific important differences between the present theoretical problematic and those that operate according to the logic of normative bourgeois literary

criticism. It is important to begin then by establishing for the reader a definition of *bourgeois ideological production,* and by extension, *normative bourgeois criticism*.

Many of the key concepts that inform this project are borrowed from the work of Spanish scholar, Juan Carlos Rodríguez, including his definition of *bourgeois ideological production*. According to Rodríguez, every social formation is characterized by its own unique ideological matrix defined as "nothing other than the reproduction, at the level of ideology, of the basic class contradiction that constitutes each kind of social relations" (*Theory* 23). Accordingly, Rodríguez describes the bourgeois matrix as "a matrix which requires that the articulation between different classes (dominant and dominated) always be conceived from the standpoint of the image of all men as free subjects, equal among themselves, in possession of their own inner truth"(18). Grasping the fact that the free subject of bourgeois relations is a radically historical event is a first step toward performing the kind of critique that allows for the comprehension not only of the logic of the bourgeois moment, but also of that of other historical periods. Rodríguez describes the level of difficulty involved in this process: "the subject is the only ideological concept through which is expressed, legitimized and lived the specific articulation of classes in capitalist societies" (23). Although the free subject is a category that is historical and unique to capitalist relations, "each ideological matrix announces itself via certain key notions, to which it grants the status of essential and unalterable elements of reality" (22). In other words, the historicity of the free subject is virtually erased within the ideological production of its moment, within ideological production that serves to legitimize the production of capitalist relations and to produce and reproduce the category of the subject: "In short: the subject is an invention of the bourgeois ideological matrix, but the latter (a) translates it to all epochs and (b) tries to pass it off as a reality either at the political or economic level, not to mention the "eidetic" or "spiritual" level" (24).

Given the fact that bourgeois ideological production serves both to produce the free subject while at the same time effectively erasing its historicity, it shouldn't be surprising to discover *normative bourgeois criticism* involved in the same processes. Bourgeois criticism, which can be understood as representing one variant of bourgeois ideological production, is conducted according to the logic of subjectivity and most often does not comprehend the

subject itself as an historical category. As a result, normative bourgeois criticism tends, as discussed above with respect to bourgeois ideological production in general, to project the category of the subject onto texts that were created prior to the inception of this category. Rodríguez's concern for breaking with the presentism characteristic of much of normative bourgeois criticism is especially important for the discussion of texts produced prior to the capitalist/bourgeois moment or during the period of its initiation (like those of Sor Juana) because of the fact that they represent a body of ideological production in which the category of the subject cannot be defined as fully constituted. When contemporary scholarship fails to question not only the position of the subject of bourgeois relations at the center of the project, but also the very category of the subject itself, what is always left intact is the basic category that serves at the ideological level toward the reproduction of the current system of social relations. In the case of many studies on Sor Juana, for example, the category of the subject is simply a given, and its role in the production of her texts is left largely unexplored. Although Sor Juana's work is replete with symptoms that reveal its status as transitional writing, so far most of the critical analyses serve to mask this reality.

To move beyond the categories associated with normative bourgeois criticism requires a recognition of the fact that in spite of its many accomplishments, such criticism is most often realized from within and according to the logic of the capitalist system; in such an equation, even many overtly progressive critical endeavors are more likely to be of a reformist rather than a revolutionary nature, which means that ultimately, the fundamental exploitative structures remain intact and unchallenged by critical discourse. In the worst cases, criticism itself assumes the profit-oriented logic of the capitalist system and becomes little more than a self-serving means to an individualistic end. By way of contrast, this discussion represents an attempt, to the extent that it is possible, to realize a critique of bourgeois ideology from without; the political inclinations of such a stance are perhaps more immediately obvious than the ways in which a critique from the margins might change our understanding of history, but the two are intricately related, as noted above and as will become clear in later arguments.

Although this discussion will assimilate certain normative practices of bourgeois scholarship given its focus on the work of one particular individual, in this case, Sor Juana, the

project as a whole aims to dislodge the subject from its stronghold at the center; the goal is to further develop a materialist understanding of history precisely by questioning the accuracy of readings that simply assume the presence of the subject in Sor Juana's text. Sor Juana has been selected as the *subject?*/*object* of study in part, precisely because she is likely to be familiar to the bourgeois Hispanist, and her work represents in this regard a meaningful object around which contradictory critical problematics may be discussed. Beginning with the premise that the *free subject* of bourgeois social relations is a radically historical notion/occurrence that must be exposed as such if ever something *other* is to take its place, this study attempts to provide a more accurate historical analysis of Sor Juana's life and work than those that can be found in many studies which interpret her life from within the mainstream of bourgeois criticism. In a word, this discussion endeavors to avoid, at all costs, reading Sor Juana's texts according to the logic of our own historical moment.

It should be acknowledged from the start that throughout the western world, none of us exists outside or independent of the category of the free subject; this is what we are, but it is precisely because of the fact that our lives are produced according to the logic of the free subject that we are often unable to perceive what came before the subject, historically speaking, and what could potentially lie beyond it. As difficult as it is to comprehend the key notions and logic of a distinct social formation from within the confines of one's own (let alone comprehend the logic of one's own system), this task remains crucial for scholarly/political projects grounded in the notion that social change is much more likely to occur if we increase our ability to perceive and understand the real (and often exploitative) mechanisms at work in a given system. If in part the function of ideology is to grease the gears of the system by masking the real relations of production currently in operation, then it can only follow that the limits of our own ideological horizon also serve to obscure our vision of the past. In any given system, ideology tells us what we *are*; bourgeois ideology in particular tells us that what we are today is an evolving manifestation of the subject, of human nature, of what we (humanity) has, at its core, always been. It tells us in subtle and not so subtle ways and on a daily basis that we can identify with and find ourselves reflected in *the human spirit* which inspired cave paintings as well as the *Mona Lisa* and comes alive on the pages of everything from the Bible to Plato's

Republic to *Crime and Punishment*, and of course in the lines and verses of Sor Juana's poems and letters. Rodríguez describes this ideological process as an "eternalizing evolutionism" which effectively erases the historicity of the subject and literature alike (*Theory* 24). Just as the subject is understood as a transhistorical reality (within the bourgeois ideological matrix), so is literary production, which represents the expression of the inner truth of the subject/author as well as "the essential truth of all human subjects" (17). Moving beyond the category of the subject/human spirit is very difficult given our bourgeois predisposition to understand the history of humanity as a kind of kaleidoscope of historical variations on the same theme, and attempting a critique from without is especially difficult at a historical juncture in which serious alternatives to capitalism have a very narrow foothold, both in terms of existing political regimes as well as within the context of ideological production. In spite of the complexities involved in the process, it is worth repeating that questioning traditional bourgeois categories (by historicizing the subject) is necessary in order to gain a better understanding of human history in general as well as our own historical moment.

Understanding the historical production of subjectivity requires, as is evidenced plainly in the work of Rodríguez, a close examination of the interaction of the contradictory ideological forces present during the transition, a moment when feudal and proto-capitalist social relations coexisted and collided. Over the course of this discussion it should become clear that Sor Juana's work is useful for demonstrating the explanatory reach of Rodriguez's theory of history. At the same time, the goal is also to expand the capacities of Rodriguez's Althusserian problematic by asking what new knowledge might be produced when this particular theory of history engages directly with the question of women's history. To this end, the final chapter is dedicated to exploring the issue of *sexual difference* as it was understood/produced by the waning feudal and emerging capitalist systems during the transition. To historicize Sor Juana's textual production is to participate in the project of historicizing the category of *subjectivity* as well as that of *gender* (in addition to what came before these), and the task is twofold: to produce a radically historical reading of Sor Juana that will help us to better understand the productive logic of her texts while at the same time challenging some of the critical readings of her work that have failed to understand this logic and have instead presented us with

anachronous representations of her life, often all too tellingly compatible with modern bourgeois categories.

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Introduction: Reading Sor Juana Again

0.1 Sor Juana and her recent critics

The preface to this introduction begins the critique that will be developed in the following chapters of some of the shortcomings of bourgeois literary criticism and the ways in which these are in evidence in typical discussions of Sor Juana's work. A simple perusal of the titles on library shelves housing studies of her works quickly demonstrates her general categorization as somewhat of an anomaly within the history of Hispanic literature, an anomaly precisely because she seems curiously similar to us, ahead of her time, even almost modern. Titles such as Georgina Sabat de Rivers' *En busca de Sor Juana* suggest the enigmatic quality attributed to the nun's life and reveal the intense interest inspired by a woman author who not only enjoyed success in the 17th century, but who dared to write in defense of her own writing in spite of the potential consequences of doing so under the watchful eye of the Inquisition. Without a doubt, Sor Juana's life challenged some of the institutional norms of her historical moment, and accordingly, to study her work is to study the nature of its perplexities and their relationship to not only Sor Juana's historical milieu but also to our own. Because of the fact that she was often at odds with some of the authority figures around her, it is easy to understand why she has been readily adopted as a topic of study for many contemporary scholars whose work examines issues such as race, gender and/or the discourses produced on the margins of hegemony. Precisely because she is such an intriguing figure, however, one should take care to read Sor Juana's work according to a theoretical framework capable of considering the productive logic of the contradictions within her texts. The task is to explain rather than mystify her work, and the present discussion represents an effort to resist the temptation of modernizing Sor Juana by artificially inflating her subjectivity and hence portraying her life as an anomaly for her moment rather than as a historically anchored phenomenon.

Many of Sor Juana's recent critics don't hesitate to categorize her work as early or premodernism or early or proto-feminism, depicting her as visionary and subversive, a woman

truly ahead of her time. Sabat de Rivers pauses in her introduction to *En busca de Sor Juana* in order to qualify her decision to utilize the term "proto-feminist" throughout:

> Estamos conscientes, al aplicar teorías feministas y de género a la obra de SJ, de que la escritora pertenece al siglo XVII. Sin embargo, dadas las ideas avanzadas de la monja en este aspecto—por lo que podríamos incluso darle el apelativo de protofeminista- nos parece legítimo y adecuado el hacerlo. (28)

In spite of her defense of women's intelligence and their capacity, even duty, to study and compose, the categorization of Sor Juana's work as early feminism is often especially problematic given that it quickly becomes difficult to identify the origins of feminist impulses within her historical moment, with the result that frequently critics are forced to identify the primary source of Sor Juana's feminism as, quite simply, herself. Both Sor Juana and feminism itself are left devoid of historical anchoring. In such an equation, causality is inevitably attributed almost exclusively to the unique, visionary perspective of the individual, and in this manner, human subjectivity eclipses social relations in the explanation of historical processes (Read, "María" 191); the excessive emphasis on the role of individual agency leaves the crucial task of historicizing pending. At the same time, Sor Juana herself is burdened by her champions with an enormous task, namely that of single-handedly comprehending and critiquing her historical moment. Literally centuries ahead of her time, she is too often portrayed as the bearer of a fully formed modern psychology complete with a rich interior life which allowed her to apprehend her social determination directly, while consciously, yet carefully, rejecting its constraints. For example, Sabat de Rivers, also states that "la poeta tenía perfecta conciencia de su identidad como mujer y de los problemas que enfrentaba en una sociedad patriarcal"[1] (36).

[1] Sabat de Rivers will go on to say that Sor Juana was also acutely aware that she was alone in her fight to defend her life as a writer as well as the intellectual equality of men and women (36). Although the power of Sor Juana's intellect can scarcely be doubted, Sabat de Rivers' depiction of her as a visionary capable of seeing beyond her moment and imagining a modern equality between men and women would simply have been ideologically impossible at this conjuncture. We will return to the issue of equality and what it meant for Sor Juana to ask for equality with men later in this discussion, but suffice it to say for now that Sor Juana's understanding of equality was very different from modern day conceptions predicated on the bourgeois belief that all free subjects are entailed to certain rights.

Early in the introduction to her own text on Sor Juana, Stephanie Merrim attributes the nun with a "hyper- and self-consciousness" through which she both "bespoke *and* transcended her milieu" (*Early* xi). Margaret Sayers Peden describes Sor Juana's letter to the Bishop of Puebla as "a unique document" which will have no equal for at least 150 years and then goes so far as to say that it contains "glimpses of thinly-veiled anger and exquisitely-controlled irony which probably were not perceived in its time" ("Introduction" 4). While there is certainly much to be discussed regarding the nature of Sor Juana's conflicts with the church establishment, arguments that describe her as transcending her moment undermine the development of an understanding grounded in Sor Juana's historical moment. For what does it mean to say that Sor Juana's anger and use of irony were not perceived at the time her letter was written? Was there really no one who understood her? Was Sor Juana so thoroughly ahead of her time that only recently has her writing been fully comprehended? Again the critic presents to the reader the perplexing (and marvelous) phenomenon of a subject who is, of her own volition, able to think and perceive beyond her historical moment; Sor Juana is elevated (or reduced) to the anomaly of herself, the *Woman of Genius*[2], as the unique causal force behind this reality. The proliferation of this sort of mystifying analysis suggests that postmodernity is perhaps even guiltier of misunderstanding Sor Juana than were her contemporary detractors. Given the fact that some of her superiors wished to silence her, it seems more probable that they perceived quite clearly the standpoint she was advocating.

[2] The full title of Margaret Sayers Peden's translation of Sor Juana's letter to the Bishop is: *Woman of Genius, the Intellectual Autobiography of Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz.* Both the word "genius" and the word "autobiography" are standard in descriptions of Sor Juana and her work, but both are bourgeois notions useful for the reproduction and description of bourgeois subjectivity, and as such they will need to be further scrutinized in this discussion. The notion of the "genius" for example, is adverse to the present theoretical approach that seeks to situate the role of individual agency within a much larger scheme of causality. The term "autobiography" is problematic much in the same way that the term "subject" (as delineated in the preface) is problematic. Peden's title categorizes Sor Juana's Respuesta as "autobiography" without further qualifications; if it is true that subjectivity was at this moment still in its early stages, this inevitably complicates the easy application of such terms with regard to texts written in 17th century New Spain. For this reason, readings of Sor Juana that presuppose the existence of a fully-formed subject able to announce itself through the vehicle of autobiography will always end up having to claim that Sor Juana, because of external pressures, was not able to say all that she would have, had she been free to do so. As we shall see, however, what she did not say was not so much a matter of self-censorship as it was one of ideological limits. Put another way, because her critics read her letter as autobiography, they tend to look for and even force her text to submit an expression of subjectivity that was not yet historically possible in 17th century New Spain.

In spite of their various differences in thematic focus and theoretical frameworks, most postmodern critical discussions of Sor Juana seem to agree either explicitly or implicitly upon her anomalistic status and as a result they generally encourage readers to view her life as a struggle to defend modern ideals from within the constraints of baroque culture, almost as if she were utterly antithetical to her moment. Even Stephanie Merrim who is in fact quite nervous in her introduction about falling into what she calls the "Tenth Muse trap" that she defines as "the tendency to view Sor Juana in isolation, as an isolated and ex-centric phenomenon" (*Early* xiii) devises to combat this problem by finding examples of other women of the same period who also produced arguments similar to those of Sor Juana. Very soon, Merrim has simply compiled a list of ten muses or so, all of whose work is equally "shockingly extreme and imaginative" (xvii) as that of Sor Juana. As could be expected, her opening chapter sets out to compare Sor Juana with Catalina de Erauso, La monja alférez, a nun who famously dressed and lived as a man and who Merrim will describe as "an astonishing phenomenon" (4), "anomalous and transgressive for her society" (4) and "wonderfully shocking" (5), all terms she deems equally applicable in her analysis of Sor Juana. In fact, Merrim's text frequently registers surprise and wonder as she describes the qualities and actions of the women she is studying. The constant astonishment provoked by her interaction with her subject matter is symptomatic of a kind of reading that seeks to unearth and display the uniqueness of a historical figure, and these emotive eruptions reveal Merrim's earlier insistence upon avoiding viewing Sor Juana as an isolated and anomalous figure. In spite of her nervousness about decontextualizing Sor Juana, Merrim's introduction concludes with a passage that clearly indicates her critical intention to ascertain roots of modernity and postmodernity *in individuals* from the early modern period, quickly returning to a theoretical space in which determining causality becomes very tricky. This type of analysis that posits Sor Juana and likeminded allies (known or unknown to her at the time) as the unique source(s) of change, as the women who "kept feminist issues alive over three centuries" (xv), offers no adequate explanation for ideological production as it relates to real historical mechanisms. The arguments are packed with context, but the subject at the center in effect remains floating.

In her 2007 book, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism*, Judith Bennett laments the trend, especially in the case of U.S. feminism, toward an uncritical discourse of pluralism and a general celebration of diversity that pays little attention to history (25). Her introductory remarks leave little room for misinterpretation:

> much feminist theory is remarkably uniformed by historical insight: and, most worrying of all, some young feminists cavalierly reject the utility of the past. […] In the 1970's, feminists often turned to history for inspiring stories about great women who had triumphed over adversity and accomplished marvelous deeds. Today, feminists still mostly see history, when they turn to it at all, as an ever-expanding list of positive and encouraging role models. (2-5)

Without a doubt, the "loss of historical depth in feminist scholarship" (2) that Bennett describes cripples our efforts to understand not only the historicity of literary production but also the specific historicity of women's oppression. In the case of Sor Juana, many of her contemporary critics depict her as a positive role model, often as a heroine of sorts, but then have no effective way to explain the less agreeable passages in her texts, i.e., the not-so-modern elements, except to say that they reflect the shortsightedness of her moment in general. Merrim reveals a similar attitude periodically throughout her text on Sor Juana. In the introduction, for example, she will describe Christine de Pizan as the first woman who engaged the *querelle de femmes* (the Woman Question) in the Middle Ages calling her work "the bedrock and staple of early modern feminist discourse" (*Early* xv). Very quickly however, Merrim will qualify her statement by adding that Christine de Pizan's text was "Overly involved with moral issues to the neglect of social and legal concerns, often abstract, intellectual, and rhetorical- sometimes degenerating into mere exercises in logic" (xv). The negative descriptors here are remarkable as Merrim endeavors to tease out the genuinely feminist elements from Pizan's text while at the same time encouraging the reader to take note of, but also to forgive, Pizan's inevitable deficiencies given she was a *very early feminist*.

If the present inquiry into Sor Juana's life and works is concerned to do anything at all, it is to historicize. Although the previous pages represent a brief critique of some of the tendencies of postmodern feminist scholarship on Sor Juana, they should not be read as an

unmitigated rejection of feminist scholarship, but rather as advocating for a revitalization of feminist research that does not shy away from the difficulties involved in elaborating theoretical models which allow us to better comprehend our history. Like so many other projects that can be classified as belonging to the historical materialist camp, this discussion is also predicated upon the scholarly conviction that only when we comprehend the real mechanisms involved in our exploitation are we able to begin to effect the necessary changes. Taking very seriously the notion of the *radical historicity* of textual production as Rodríguez develops and employs it in his problematic, this project represents an exploration of the specific radical historicity of Sor Juana's work. To acknowledge the radical historicity of one's object of study is to understand the object as a product of a specific set of historical relations, and as such, the productive logic of the object of study will always be intimately related to the productive logic of the social formation responsible for its production. In the case of Sor Juana's texts, written at a moment when two distinct social formations (modes of production) were struggling to suppress one other, the discovery of their radical historicity implies a scrupulous exploration of the contradictory reality of the period. The tendency, as demonstrated above, of contemporary scholarship on Sor Juana to categorize her as a "wonderfully shocking" anomaly suggests the need for a new reading that aims at elucidating the radical historicity of her texts.

0.2 The textual production of the transition

The first chapter of the following exploration of Sor Juana's texts is dedicated primarily to grounding her historically, in other words, to locating her textual production with respect to the ideologies present in 17th century Spain and New Spain during the period of the transition between feudalism and capitalism. The purpose is to challenge the unblinking portrayal of Sor Juana as an early feminist and a woman altogether ahead of her time. The opening chapter outlines and utilizes Rodríguez's theory of ideological production to construct a reading of Sor Juana that demonstrates that her writing is indeed a product of the transition, that it displays abundant evidence of the contradictions characteristic of the moment in question, and that her

work can really only be explained according to the radically historical contradictions of her moment. Because the contradictory interface of divergent historical ideologies provides the productive logic for Sor Juana's work, the first step toward unraveling the complexities of her texts involves learning to perceive the reality of this ideological battle (unconscious though it may be) as it manifests itself in the lines of her letters, plays and poems. Accordingly, this section examines carefully the ways in which Sor Juana's defense of her actions incorporates feudalizing ideology while at the same time continues to forge certain features which pertain (in the strict sense) to bourgeois ideology proper. Her fluid use of the first person and the autobiographical qualities of *La Respuesta,* for example, both confirm a perspectivism that would have been impossible prior to the advent of bourgeois social relations and that is still present in Sor Juana's writing even in spite of the dominance in her moment of resurgent feudalizing ideology. In addition, the fact that she writes and publishes lyrical poetry and plays for the theater also indicates that the bourgeois notions of authorship and the beautiful soul (which had appeared along with the advent of mercantilism between the 14th and 16th centuries) are also still in the mix here, although their continued production exists in contradiction to feudalism's attempt to reassert itself. Of particular interest in this section are certain passages from Sor Juana's letter to the Bishop of Puebla in which the description of a given scenario is at first literal (characterized by perspectivism) but then dissolves into an allegorical reading characteristic of scholastic interpretation and resurgent feudalizing ideology. In such passages, the interaction, or the permutation, of the ideological matrices of the transition is particularly clear. Specifically, this chapter begins to situate Sor Juana with respect to both the feudal ideology of *substantialism* and the *animist* ideology that accompanied the advent of bourgeois relations. Chapter One, develops the idea that Sor Juana herself can only be understood as a contradiction, although not in the sense that postmodern feminism designates as *feminist/subordinate nun*, but rather because her life was produced simultaneously by the logic of a feudal hierarchy of lords and serfs *and* by that of a new social hierarchy of souls, one that would eventually help to usher in the category of the free subject of bourgeois relations. She was, in some sense, both a servant and a proto-subject; she was a criolla of certain privilege who defended a feudal hierarchy of sorts, but a hierarchy that no

longer derived exclusively from the key feudal category of blood/lineage. In order to more fully explore the ideological contradictions of the period, Chapter One also contrasts Sor Juana's presentation of her life in *La Respuesta* with that found in the hagiography of the nun's life written by Diego Calleja.

0.3 Challenging criticism

After having situated Sor Juana's writing according to the ideological matrices present during the transition, it is possible to perform a critique of some the critical discourse on the nun that has been notably less concerned with the historicity of its object of study. Chapter Two makes the claim, as outlined in the first pages of this introduction that the tendency of normative criticism is to modernize Sor Juana. This chapter is dedicated to examining the basic forms that such modernizing arguments typically take in order to expose the bourgeois ideology that defines their logic. Generally speaking, Sor Juana's critics have thus far tended to emphasize her marginality, highlighting her status as an illegitimate child, an unmarried woman dedicated to her studies, a defender of secular notions in a religious context, a defender of women in a patriarchal world and a lyric poet writing in the face of Inquisitional threats. Chapter Two chapter examines carefully a number of critical analyses of Sor Juana including the work of Stephanie Merrim, one of Sor Juana's more recent feminist critics, and closes with a discussion of the Mexican poet Octavio Paz's extensive analysis of her life and work in his renowned text, *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, o, las trampas de la fe* (*Sor Juana: Or, The Traps of Faith*)[3].

Paz's volume, now emblematic within the field of Sor Juana scholarship, is a text that has been duly commended for the amount of research it represents, but the author's explicit rejection of any theory of causality leads to results that can only be expected and that reflect, again, the subject-centered nature of normative bourgeois criticism. Unlike many of the more recent postmodern feminist critiques of Sor Juana's work, Paz's approach still includes strong echoes of a modernist sensitivity in search of a unified Kantian subject hidden in the text.

[3] I will quote from the English translation for the purposes of this discussion.

Although Paz's work is often critiqued in the context of more recent analyses, in spite of their significant differences in approach, both Paz and Sor Juana's more recent critics do carry out a similar feat with respect to her writing. While postmodern feminist scholarship on Sor Juana (tending to understand her subjectivity as fragmented or somehow disjointed) attempts to extract a feminist and/or a distinctly early modern voice in her texts, Paz is concerned to distill her *authentic poetic voice* as it manifests itself and discovers to the reader the truth of Sor Juana's rich interior life. In both instances, the historicity of the text is largely absent from the analysis. Paz effectively performs what Rodríguez refers to with respect to normative bourgeois criticism in general as a "manipulation and distortion" (*State* 14) of the text as he translates Sor Juana's work into categories more recognizable for the bourgeois consciousness, i.e., human spirit, poetry, even Mexican national identity. As a poet himself, his critical voice is augmented by the privileged perspective afforded to him by his own sensitive soul; being a poet, he is more fully equipped to identify successfully and unearth from the proliferation of *baroque rhetoric and convention* the elements in Sor Juana's work that represent *sincere expressions* of her inner reality. Unsurprisingly, Paz maintains that Sor Juana's most authentic, naked expression of herself is more evident in her lyric poetry than in her liturgical contributions.

0.4 Ideology takes the stage

Having established in Chapter Two the general tendencies of literary criticism with respect to Sor Juana, Chapter Three continues to explore the distinct ideological matrices present in the transition in order to examine the ways in which their intersection impacted the feudal notion of society understood as an organic hierarchy. In part, this chapter develops the discussion of *substantialism* and *animism* begun in the first chapter by adding a third category also derived from the work of Rodríguez, *Aristotelian rationalism*, in order to further nuance the discussion of transitional ideologies. This portion of the project examines specific descriptions and references to the social hierarchy that appear in Sor Juana's texts with the intent to discover the particular categories she uses to legitimize social stratification and one's

place in the hierarchy. Again, it will be clear that her writing was produced during a period of transition in which contradictory ideologies were often melded together in texts that captured the clash (ideological and otherwise) of two distinct modes of production. In point of fact, Rodríguez describes Aristotelian rationalism as a sort of compromise between substantialism and animism that accommodated features of each. Chapter Three demonstrates how Sor Juana's texts combine categories pertaining to two contradictory ideologies in order to build a defense of her actions and a notion of social hierarchy that is neither strictly feudal nor modern. Although its iteration would have been impossible without the impact of early bourgeois ideology together with the notion of the beautiful soul, the social hierarchy Sor Juana describes is one that continues to register the scholastic obligation to ground everything in matter. Sor Juana's particular tendency is to ground everything according to the concept of the *God-given nature* of a thing or person. Although the hierarchy she constructs essentially serves to legitimize the same social stratification already in existence (with the nobility and clergy representing the highest strata), it is also a shift away from a hierarchy based exclusively on the category of blood/lineage. The hierarchy she defends is very similar to descriptions found in texts by other writers of the transition period, such as *El examen de los ingenios* by Juan de Huarte. In both Sor Juana and Huarte's work, there appears a sort of dual hierarchy in which both *blood/substance* and personal *merit* (which could appear under a number of distinct descriptors: valor, deeds, and/or nature) serve to determine one's rightful place in society. The emphasis on God-given nature as one's defining substance effectively displaces the category of blood in Sor Juana's writing, and thus legitimizes what is essentially still a feudalizing hierarchy but one that now accommodates certain categories pertaining to emerging bourgeois ideology.

The changes taking place in the organization of the social hierarchy during the transition can hardly be discussed without taking into consideration two key developments of this moment—the emergence of the public/private split and the centralization taking place not only in the Absolutist State but in social institutions in general. Along with its focus on transitional changes affecting the notion of the feudal social hierarchy, Chapter Three also considers some of that ways that the emerging public/private split continued to corrode feudalizing ideology. Sor Juana's plays are particularly useful for observing the ideological shifts taking place. In

Amor es más laberinto the main character, Teseo, although noble by birth, reveals his preference for measuring worth according to *deeds* rather than *blood* marking a clear difference from earlier feudal logic. In *Los empeños de una casa*, the feudalizing notion of *honor* is reconfigured significantly as it is impacted by the notion of the public/private split. Both of these plays represent a highly contradictory ideological mix that continues to legitimize the feudal social hierarchy while at the same time contributing to the construction of the notion of the proto-subject of bourgeois relations. In the latter portion of Chapter Three, *Los empeños de una casa* is compared and contrasted to the original version, *Casa con dos puertas mala es de guardar,* by Pedro Calderón de la Barca in order to better illustrate the subtle yet significant ideological differences characterizing the distinct works of the transition.

0.5 Women and women's writing in the transition

Building upon the arguments developed in the previous chapters regarding the logic of the period of transition from feudalism to capitalism, Chapter Four engages the present theoretical problematic in posing important questions about the transformations that took place in this moment with respect to notions of sexual difference. This chapter will explore, to a certain degree, the birth of the category of gender as we now know it, tracing a shift from a feudal/substantialist understanding of sexual difference to a modern biological one. This section examines certain arguments from Thomas Laqueur's *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, a book often cited in works on Sor Juana and other women writers of the same period. One of the goals of Chapter Four is to locate Sor Juana historically once again, this time within the interstices of the historical and ideological struggle to define the nature and place of women at the advent of the capitalist period. This chapter poses a series of questions directed at developing a greater understanding of the logic of the transitional struggle taking place around the notions of sex and gender.

It is necessary to ask, for example, why the *Querelle de femmes* (the Woman Question), a polemical inquiry into the definition of the female sex, arose precisely at the historical conjuncture of the transition between feudalism and capitalism. In the same vein, we must

also question why the period of the transition witnessed a general clampdown upon women and an insistence upon their utter inferiority to men from ideologues on all sides, including both the scholastics and the humanists. Why were Sor Juana's male superiors in the church hierarchy so concerned to mute her display of intellect when much of her written work resonated with their own feudalizing ideological discourse? In order to help develop answers to these questions, this chapter also considers a work by Mar Martínez-Góngora entitled *Discursos sobre la mujer en el Humanismo renacentista español. Los casos de Antonio de Guevara, Alfonso y Juan de Valdés y Luis de León*, an analysis that engages various Spanish texts involved in the Q*uerelle* and makes an effort to understand the historical reasons for the increase in the severity of women's subjugation to men that marked the period in question.

Clearly, during the transition, women's bodies represent one of the many particular sites of class struggle; because of their role in the literal reproduction of the relations of production in any given system, the successful integration of women into the system is always required. Sor Juana was writing at a moment when neither the feudal patriarchal institutions in existence nor the emerging bourgeois institutions were concerned to defend the autonomy of women; on the contrary, both of these factions were interested in subordinating women, although each for different reasons and according to distinct logics. The final chapter of this project explores the logic(s) of the transitional clampdown on women and Sor Juana's response to both the scholastic (feudal) and the humanist (bourgeois) arguments against them.

If notions of sexual difference were changing radically during the period in which Sor Juana lived, it is important to determine the particular ideological extraction that defined her own understanding of sexual difference. The basic problem with many recent accounts that depict Sor Juana as a great defender of womankind is that they often do not pause to consider the fact that the category of *woman* did not signify for the 17th century nun what it does for present-day members of bourgeois society. In contrast to this kind of criticism, the present discussion offers a rebuttal of contemporary scholarship on Sor Juana that depicts her as an early feminist. Rather than embodying a modern defense of women, certain of her writings in fact represent a defense of a feudalizing notion of women (and men as well) that was being eroded during the period of the transition. Examining Sor Juana's particular struggle to craft a

rational defense of her actions is very useful for helping us to perceive the mechanisms by which feudal women, over time, were effectively transformed into members of bourgeois society, members whose association with the private/domestic sphere would come to be understood as naturally correlating with their gender. Sor Juana's ideologically contradictory defense of her actions is indicative of the limits imposed by the ideological matrices of her moment and can only be understood according to their logic. As such, the defense of women included in her work is a radically historical one *not anomalous* to its moment of production, and the classification of her work as *feminist* is one that must be revisited.

The societal necessity to channel women's reproductive capacity has taken different historical forms and the social legitimization of these forms can be perceived in the ideological production of a given system. In the same way, the ideological struggles against forms of integration/subordination can also be detected in such texts. One has to guard, however, against any reading that isn't grounded in the understanding that every reaction to oppression is as radically historical as the oppression itself and the social formation(s) that sustains them both. The characterization of Sor Juana as a woman ahead of her time who against all odds "kept feminist ideas alive over three centuries" (Merrim, *Early* xv) is indicative of a kind of scholarship that ultimately negates the historicity of the transitional text by subjecting it to an interpretation according to categories that belong exclusively to the bourgeois/capitalist moment. And just as little or no consideration is directed in many such analyses to the fact that the *subject* is a historical notion born of bourgeois relations, the same can be said of the category of *feminism*. While there can be no doubt regarding the validity of feminist concerns for combating subordination and realizing equality between men and women, it also seems clear that there is a need for a more rigorous commitment to good historicizing on the part of feminist scholars whose work too often tends to universalize or transhistoricize its categories of analysis; terms such as *women*, *patriarchy*, *gender* and *feminism* are just a few examples of bourgeois categories whose own ideological history is often lost in scholarship that lacks a solid theory of history.

This project is informed throughout by the idea that *feminism* is a notion with a specific history that constitutes a historically specific form of resistance to the subordination of women.

The notion of *feminism* itself is one that is overdetermined by the logic of capitalism and its key notion of *subjectivity*. Forms of resistance that came before feminism, such as that embodied in Sor Juana's work have to be understood according to the logic of the mode of production (and reproduction) to which they pertained. As many of her critics have noted, Sor Juana does speak of an equality between men and women in her writing; indeed, her most famous lines are perhaps those she wrote in the poem commonly referred to as "Hombres necios" where she fearlessly attacks men's abuses of women's affection for them. As we shall see, however, neither her poetry nor her response to the Bishop composed a visionary blue print for a modern society where women would enjoy equality with men as fellow occupants of the public sphere; this kind of thinking would take well over a century more to appear, at least in the context of Spain and New Spain. Sor Juana's work does not flatten out the social hierarchy by claiming that all are equal, and far from the assertions of ingenious feminist subversion, the equality she defended apologetically was an equality that could be and was defended according to the logic of a still sacralized and feudal hierarchy. In historicizing important notions such as equality, the present project attempts to aid in restoring historicity not only to Sor Juana's work but also to women's struggles against different historical forms of subordination. In an essay that chronicles the evolution of feminist thought, Angela Olalla's critique of Luce Irigaray also embodies a larger critique of tendencies in the feminist approach toward history. Olalla captures very well the nature of the problem we face and at the same time, points us in the direction of a materialist solution:

> ¿Es igual la vida de las mujeres después de Freud a la vida de las mujeres de la época de Platón? Al no considerar la especificidad histórica y económica del poder machista y sus contradicciones ideológicas y materiales, se ve obligada a elaborar el tipo de definición metafísica de la mujer que pretende evitar. De algún modo, analiza a la "mujer" en categorías idealistas y empobrece su magnífica crítica al pensamiento machista tratando de "poner nombre" a lo femenino. Siempre que se trate de elaborar una definición de la "mujer" se cae en el esencialismo (Olalla 10).

In summation, this discussion endeavors to discover the radically historical origins of the seemingly historically anomalous elements held to be present in the texts of Sor Juana who represents a woman not so much ahead of her time as one right in the knotty middle of it.

Chapter One: Situating Sor Juana with Respect to the Ideologies of the Transition

> No hay duda que para inteligencia de muchos lugares es menester mucha historia, costumbres, ceremonias, proverbios y aun maneras de hablar de aquellos tiempos en que se escribieron, para saber sobre qué caen y a qué aluden algunas locuciones de las divinas letras…. (Juana, "Respuesta" 466)

> It was a gamble: if radical historicity did not serve to explain each poem line by line, then it served no purpose at all. (Rodíguez, *Theory* 16)

1.1 The search for the sincere subject of bourgeois relations

Sor Juana's most well-known work is without a doubt her epistolary response to the letter she had previously received from the Bishop of Puebla, Don Manuel Fernández de Santa Cruz y Sahagún, a document that he famously signed under the feminine alias of Sor Filotea. Sor Juana's response to the Bishop is commonly described as a defense of not only her own rights, but the rights of women in general, to engage in intellectual pursuits through study and writing. This letter, more than any other of her texts, is most often cited with reference to the claim that Sor Juana was a woman ahead of her time, a visionary, an early feminist, etc. For many critics, because this text is one of the only examples of women's writing in New Spain (and the Americas in general) during this period, it quickly takes on the status of anomaly, its uniqueness demanding special attention and quite often, the application of theoretical categories usually reserved for texts produced at a much later date. The problem that occurs with Sor Juana's categorization as a visionary, however, is that this sort of criticism fails to comprehend Sor Juana's letter as an artifact hewn from the same ideological fabric as other texts being produced at the same historical conjuncture. Although Sor Juana's text is generally explored with a certain amount of reference to its historical context, in the end, most contemporary critics conclude that this text especially, transcends its historical moment, and that its author was somehow able to imagine a kind of equality between men and women that

wouldn't be seriously defended again for at least a century and a half. Portraying Sor Juana as an isolated precursor of modernity and feminism alike, the historical origins and logic of both her complaints and defense of her actions are reduced to her personal response to her situation and her singular capacity for imagining a new direction for social relations.

Having classified Sor Juana's letter in this way, as visionary and feminist document, a significant obstacle arises before the critic –how to deal with all of the passages where her letter is not so visionary or feminist. In response to this predicament generated by its own problematic, modern bourgeois criticism often tends to parse Sor Juana's texts, including her letter to the Bishop, classifying various passages according to two broad categories, *the sincere* versus *the artificial*; that which is considered to be sincere writing is granted the role of reflecting the true Sor Juana while that which is determined formulaic writing is understood as merely reproducing baroque convention. Normative criticism tends to identify what it terms as "the reproduction of baroque convention" in Sor Juana also as a form of self-censorship in her work, representing her need to avoid trouble with the authorities. In this way such criticism is able to maintain that even what is considered imitative and rhetorical can be understood as having a function still closely related to the elements considered to be more authentic/personal/sincere. Interpreting Sor Juana in this fashion is characteristic of a critical analysis eager to unearth as much of Sor Juana's true self as possible, an endeavor that leaves both critics and readers alike suspecting that we have only gotten but a glimpse of Sor Juana's true self given the supposition that her subversive way of thinking could hardly be expressed without endangering herself during her historical moment. She simultaneously becomes more of a mystery and more of a heroine, "the prodigy of the colonial period, her genius uncontested today", clearly a very enticing foremother and feminist role model when framed in this manner (Peden, "Introduction" 9).

The quest to discover the true Sor Juana often means that her texts are drastically pruned and reorganized into an artifact that can be clearly recognized within the limits of the bourgeois ideological matrix. But while it is true that literary criticism does require a certain level of abstraction—the critic can't be obligated to reproduce the entirety of Sor Juana's work within the context of a critical analysis—at the same time, careful attention should be paid to

what is discussed and what is left out in critical assessments of her work. The following quote from Peden's introduction to Sor Juana's letter more than hints at the pruning and restructuring processes taking place:

> One area of criticism, largely justified, is related to the excesses of the baroque in her work. She is often accused of having surpassed her peninsular model, the Spanish poet Luis de Góngora y Argote, in inaccessibility. Julio Jimenez Rueda probably best expresses this view when he says, 'The versification in Sor Juana's works is natural and clear when it is sincere. When she imitates Góngora her poetry is motley and in bad taste… But when Sor Juana's own voice is raised, –a voice which Mexico's dean of letters, Don Alfonso Reyes, has called 'that impetuous, dionysiac lyricism à la divine,' —it transcends time and place to become universal. ("Introduction" 9-10)

Clearly, the critics Peden quotes here much prefer what they perceive to be the lyrical and therefore sincere and natural elements in Sor Juana's work. The above quote reveals a symptomatic rejection of what are termed baroque forms as well as the inability of many present-day critics to provide a sufficient and objective historical analysis of a very familiar term, *the baroque*. There seems to exist in this type of analysis an almost visceral rejection of what is perceived as an insincere aesthetic; in short, bourgeois criticism reveals itself as prone to accept as *true* and *natural* the textual elements which most closely assimilate (or can be rendered to assimilate) modern bourgeois ideology along with its category of the subject. That which is indicative of the presence of the subject is thus elevated in such criticism to the status of *sincere* and *universal*.

Even when there is an effort to save the so-called baroque elements in Sor Juana's texts, they must be rescued in a way that discovers their ingenuity and the ingenuity of the subject that produced them. Ilan Stavans agrees with Octavio Paz regarding the need to conserve, at least in part, the relevance of these elements:

> In *The Traps of Faith*, Paz places them in context. 'It has often been said—both in praise and deprecation—that the Mexican baroque was an exaggeration of the Spanish models,' he observes. 'Indeed, like all imitative art, the poetry of New Spain attempted to surpass its models: it was the extreme of baroqueness, the apogee of strangeness.

> This excess is proof of its authenticity.' Nevertheless, amid this strangeness, Sor Juana has a room of her own: her Baroque voice is neither misguided nor excessive, and by virtue of her status as a colonial woman, the dichotomies she writes of in *romances* like 'While by Grace I am inspired' and sonnets such as 'In my pursuit, World, why such diligence?' possess an urgency no Spanish poet could dream of. […] Sor Juana, much like Borges three centuries later, found originality in imitation. While Góngora's fingerprints, and a certain Quevedian mood, lurk in many corners of her work, she is never so derivative as to lose her own personality. (xxxi)

Georgina Sabat de Rivers makes a very similar assessment of the interplay between sincere and rhetorical elements in Sor Juana's work in a chapter that deals with the opposition between art and nature, or the artificial/imitative versus the natural/original. Although Sabat de Rivers admits that baroque convention does impose certain limits, she concludes at the end of the chapter that Sor Juana's work participates in traditional forms but imbues them with originality: "…hallamos, una vez más, el sello avanzado y original que supo impartirle a su poesía de tradición de siglos nuestra "Fenix Americana", Sor Juan Inés de la Cruz" (78). Critics like Sabat de Rivers, Stavans and Paz are intent, above all, upon locating the sincere, true, authentic and/or original in Sor Juana, and although they recognize that her unique personality may be hard to perceive in her more baroque/imitative/opaque works, for these critics, it *is* present even there.

In Pamela Kirk's text, *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Religion, Art and Feminism*, we find an example of the lengths to which critics must go in order to obligate baroque conventions to produce evidence of the originality of the author. In the following quote, Kirk explains how elements that could reasonably be read as mere rhetorical devices become, in the agile writing of Sor Juana, an ingenious and intentional redeployment of conventional forms. That which according to the critic lacks personal meaning in other texts, is here evidence of the unique voice at work:

> [I]n *Athenagoric Letter*, she frames her arguments with language of desire and response, engendering and birth. So the opening sentence speaks of birth and desire, and of pleasure as response and motivation. And she repeats in her

> second paragraph: 'We spoke of this and it pleased you (as I have said) to see this written' (OC 4:412.17). At her closing of the *Letter* she laments that, just 'as the bitch who in great haste gives birth to her blind pups,' she has hastily brought her offspring, the text, to term. With hesitation, she sends her argument forth 'in embryo, … as the she-bear gives birth to her formless cubs' (OC 4:434.904). Thought considering a book as one's child was a common literary topos–which Cervantes satirized in his prologue to Don Quixote–and the she-bear with her cub was a common emblem of the artistic process in the Renaissance; the nun twice casts herself in the role of an animal parent rather than a human one, further accentuating her 'unworthiness' as part of what Oliver has shown to be her elaborate strategies of (self)irony. (100)

Again, the critical gesture is repeated and Sor Juana's originality is asserted. One wonders if another critic might find the incorporation of these *two images* of animals giving birth to blind and shapeless offspring as an example of the *baroque excess* mentioned in Peden's introduction as quoted above. What is clear is that the job of the critic is one and the same, to weed the conventional from the original, and in this case to tease the irony from Sor Juana's texts. Kirk will insist over and again upon the ironic nature of Sor Juana's writing and especially in her response to the Bishop[4]. Whether they choose to praise or denigrate the elements they perceive as baroque in Sor Juana's work, all of the critics mentioned above share a focus on excavating *a true voice*, the unique personality of Sor Juana. Because Sor Juana *as subject* is what such criticism seeks to reveal (although the issue of subjectivity is generally not historicized), many critics find themselves required to ignore, explain or excuse elements which function according to a logic other than that which produces a modern notion of subjectivity.

[4]It is worth noting that insisting upon the ironic nature of Sor Juana's text allows the critic to reinterpret and imbue with originality any line that follows the patterns of baroque convention. For example, Kirk will also state with reference to Sor Juana's *Carta Aténtagorica*:

> Sor Juana uses expressions such as "una pobre mujer" (a lowly woman) or "una mujer ignorante" always in an indirect, ironic manner. Although, in her conclusion, the nun apologizes for the crudeness, brevity, and lack of scholarship of her letter, coming where it does—at the end of a brilliant polished refutation of Vieira—it is once again an ironic salute to a literary convention rather than a judgment of her work. (98)

In this way Kirk infuses these lines from Sor Juana's text with a meaning that points toward the willful expression of individual agency and creativity, assuming that these values must be present and defended in the nun's writing.

Although the above quotes inevitably bring to mind a comparison of distinct samples of Sor Juana's poetic works, for example, a comparison between her lyrical poetry and her famously complex and Gongoresque poem, *Primero sueño*, her letter to the Bishop is also a document that is often spliced into sincere versus rhetorical passages within the context of normative critical discourse about her work. Somewhat ironically, this letter is generally regarded as her most intimate prose expression of and reaction to her life situation, but at the same time, as her most subversive writing, a document reportedly replete with self-censoring tactics. Kirk, for example, insists that Sor Juana frequently employed the "denial of her own voice" as a rhetorical device (98). Much of present day criticism takes the position that when Sor Juana adopts what is perceived to be a scholastic rhetoric periodically throughout her letter, she does so in order to satisfy the demands of her subordinate position in the Church hierarchy. Given this conclusion, the more scholastic passages of her letter are often set aside to a certain degree, acknowledged but not analyzed carefully and thoroughly in critical discussions of her work. Because such passages are not viewed as representative of her truest sentiments, they are deemed less authentic and therefore less important by critics attempting to discover the authentic voice of the nun. The significance of such passages is reduced to providing evidence of her oppressive context, the assumption being that textual elements that do not corroborate the image of Sor Juana as visionary are simply hollow reproductions of baroque scholastic rhetoric.

The critical work of Sor Juana scholar Stephanie Merrim is an example of a somewhat more sophisticated approach to the problem we have been discussing, but one that in the end again resolves the issue of the sincere/conventional split by simply reducing the problem of contradictory textual elements to one common source –*the baroque*. In the following quote Merrim discusses the repetition of melancholy elements in Sor Juana's work and engages the critical discourse on authentic versus conventional textual elements:

> Whether melancholy constitutes part of a mask designed to produce the sympathy that Sonnet #150 requests and Leonor inspires, whether for Sor Juana it was a seventeenth-century malady and topic, […] whether it was a central element of the nun's personality, or whether it was a product of circumstances such as those that the 'Autodefensa' and

> the 'Respuesta' detail, is impossible to determine absolutely. That is to say, as I intimated in the discussion of Sor Juana's woman-to-woman love poetry in Chapter Two, we have to allow allow *for an indeterminable mix of authenticity and convention* (emphasis added), of experiential *bios* and constructed *autos*, in the self-representational worlds of any writer and can only hope to elucidate both the personal circumstances and the topics that bear on the mix. (*Early* 158-9)

Merrim's quote, as well as the others above, is a good example of the most basic constituents of normative bourgeois criticism recognizable in the following terms: 1) The text is defined as a dense and complicated mixture of authenticity and convention, of individual expression and exterior influences. 2) The critic is recognized as the one who can help us to determine the composition of the mixture, if it can be determined at all. 3) The overarching goal of the project is to somehow get at the unique and authentic individual whose presence in the literary work is often cloaked in conventional themes and forms. 4) The author is defined as the ultimate cause behind the logic of his or her text; the sincere author is the soul in the text whose individual agency is located and reaffirmed through the critical analysis.

The fact of the matter, however, is that the pursuit of the authentic voice in the text is an activity that serves at a very basic level to legitimize and reproduce bourgeois ideology while at the same time making it difficult to get at the true historical productive logic of literary texts. The problem of accurate historical interpretation is especially exaggerated with regard to texts such as Sor Juana's where the productive logic has to be understood as derivative of the ideological matrices of more than one historical mode of production. The perceived dual nature of the text insisted upon *and generated by* such a critical position is further evidenced in statements like the following one by Merrim: "Sor Juana's acute self-awareness shines through from beneath the baroque acrobatics of her works" (29)[5]. Again, we are confronted with the same critical formula –the individual author struggling to express herself in spite of her heavily rhetorical baroque context. It is important to point out that the failure to explain a given text

[5]The use of the word "shines" is not arbitrary within the bourgeois matrix which understands the soul or the inner truth as that which works to express itself in spite of all exterior impositions. Such terminology expresses the logic of the interior/exterior and private/public dichotomies that are central to bourgeois ideology and which will be further explored throughout this discussion.

according to its historical productive logic is not a superficial or isolated flaw in bourgeois criticism, but rather the norm; such misrecognition is, in a sense, its very *raison d'être.* Bourgeois ideology can only *think* Sor Juana's work according to the category of the subject, and therefore, bourgeois critical analysis of her work represents a sort of re-writing of her texts designed (albeit unconsciously) to inscribe her texts within the logic of the expression of subjectivity. In the end there is a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy embedded within critiques like Merrim's in which her description of the baroque text is equal to her theoretical explanation of the text. In other words, the works she literally describes as "monsters [that] defy singular categorization" actually become monstrous ambiguities within the context of her own critical discussion. As Merrim states referring to Sor Juana's texts: "they incarnate incongruous conjunction, paradoxical encounter. In their residual implication as prodigies or omens sent by the Divinity with a message to be deciphered, they also signify undecidability" (*Early* 24). She describes the texts in this way and they effectively remain undecipherable, inexplicable, their logic reduced to the nebulous and slippery category of "the baroque".

The approach of the present project is very different as the intent is not to prove the visionary uniqueness of Sor Juana's voice nor determine which passages represent her true sentiments and which do not. The goal is to comprehend the historical logic of her texts according to the particular moment in which they were produced. As can be imagined, the term *baroque* is not regarded here as an adequate theoretical concept for comprehending the logic of Sor Juana's texts nor is the dichotomy between sincere and artificial. The textual pruning necessary for revealing the subject/visionary behind Sor Juana's words often leads to the elimination of the central ideological contradiction, or the historical clash, that played itself out on the pages of the texts of Sor Juana and so many of her contemporaries. To eliminate the evidence of this central contradiction is to erase the historicity of the object of study. The first chapters of this project aim at restoring historicity to Sor Juana's textual production by examining her work according to a theoretical framework capable of recognizing and analyzing the historical processes responsible for the ideologically contradictory nature of Sor Juana's writing. At this point, it is important for the reader to acquire a very clear idea of the precise nature of the problems confronted when reading Sor Juana's work.

As can be expected, certain passages in Sor Juana's letter are especially susceptible to historical distortion when read through the lens of a modern bourgeois understanding of the individual. The passage cited below is particularly useful for considering the complexity of the problem presented to the critic. As one reads the following passage, it is relatively easy to begin to imagine where the partition between what might be regarded as sincere expression and what might be classified as baroque/scholastic rhetoric (according to normative critical models) could be made. In this passage, Sor Juana describes her incessant inquisitiveness with regard to everything around her:

> Este modo de reparos en todo me sucedía y sucede siempre, sin tener yo arbitrio en ello, que antes me suelo enfadar porque me cansa la cabeza; y yo creía que a todos sucedía esto mismo y el hacer versos, hasta que la experiencia me ha demostrado lo contrario; y es de tal manera esta naturaleza o costumbre, que nada veo sin segunda consideración. Estaban en mi presencia dos niñas jugando con un trompo, y apenas yo vi el movimiento y la figura cuando empecé, con esta mi locura, a considerar el fácil moto de la forma esférica y cómo duraba el impulso ya impreso e independiente de su causa, pues distante la mano de la niña, que era la causa motiva, bailaba el trompillo; y no contenta con esto, hice traer harina y cernerla para que, en bailando el trompo encima, se conociese si eran círculos perfectos o no los que describía con su movimiento; y hallé que no eran sino unas líneas espirales que iban perdiendo lo circular cuando se iba remitiendo el impulso. Jugaban otras a los alfileres (que es el más frívolo juego que usa puerilidad); yo me llegaba a contemplar las figuras que formaban; y viendo que acaso se pusieron tres en triángulo, me ponía a enlazar uno en otro, acordándome de que aquélla era la figura que dicen tenía el misterioso anillo de Salomón, en que había una lejanas luces y representaciones de la Santísima Trinidad, en virtud de lo cual obraba tantos prodigios y maravillas: y la misma que dicen tuvo el arpa de David, y que por eso sanaba Saúl a su sonido; y casi la misma conservan las arpas en nuestros tiempos. (*Woman* 61-3)

For the modern reader of this passage it appears that nearer to the end Sor Juana begins to wander off track. Whereas at first she seems focused on narrating precise literal events and

her reaction to each, in the latter section she seems to be rambling somewhat about the divine significance of the triangular shape. Even more surprising perhaps, is the abruptness of the transition from the literalness of the narrative portion of the passage into the latter more theological/interpretive portion. While the logic of the selection is perhaps not immediately clear, it is surely insufficient to simply attribute the last portion to Sor Juana's obligation to satisfy her superiors regarding her focus on spiritual matters. The thesis that splits Sor Juana's work into sincere versus conventional writing leaves us with very few tools for understanding not only the latter portion of the above quote[6] but also, and perhaps even more important, the specific historical relationship between what appear to be two distinct modes of writing operating within the same text. It isn't surprising then, to discover that the second portion of the above passage doesn't often appear in critical discussions of Sor Juana's work. It doesn't lend itself to ironic interpretation and it cannot be easily bent to reflect bourgeois subjectivity, or even a subversive expression of the subject. For bourgeois criticism, the last section of the above quote remains opaque, unwilling to give up its secret, and as a result it is largely ignored, perhaps regarded as just another instance of the scholastic rhetoric that still lingers in 17th century New Spain. What's more, the contradictory relationship between the distinct discourses present in this passage is left unexplained.

The most obvious problem presented to the critic who does attempt a full analysis of the lines quoted above is that of explaining why Sor Juana so abruptly shifts from one mode of expression to another and how these distinct discourses relate to one another in the context of her work. Sor Juana's letter is a document that, as many critics have indeed pointed out, alternates between a more literal, even autobiographical narrative, and interpretive passages that utilize scriptural references to assess and justify her actions. The pattern of literal description combined with scholastic interpretation exhibited in this passage is, as many critics have noted, representative of the letter as a whole. While critics sometimes disagree about the degree to which Sor Juana's incorporation of scholastic passages was part of a fully conscious

[6] If one applies the logic of the sincere versus authentic distinction to all of Sor Juana's writing, it must be admitted that the majority of her known work must be categorized as baroque/scholastic rhetoric. The fact that normative criticism generally focuses its attention on a small slice of Sor Juana's actual textual production is also evidence of the theoretical bias we have been tracing.

narrative strategy—some critics prefer to see these elements as residual forms that Sor Juana reproduces because they are simply part of her context—they all share a focus on identifying that which is sincere. As mentioned above, normative literary criticism on Sor Juana is guilty not only of expressing a preference for "the sincere" but also of failing to provide a satisfactory critical explanation for the alternation between literal description and scholastic interpretation in Sor Juana's texts.

The failure to explain the contradictory elements in Sor Juana's work is neither a new problem for bourgeois criticism nor one unique to discussions of Sor Juana. The same estimation can be made of many critical analyses that aim to illuminate the textual production of not only the baroque, but the history of literary production in general. This is the thesis elaborated by Spanish scholar, Juan Carlos Rodríguez, in his book, *Teoría e historia de la producción ideológica: las primeras literaturas burguesas (Theory and History of Ideological Production: The First Bourgeois Literatures*)[7]. More specifically, Rodríguez endeavors in his text to provide a model for theorizing and understanding the textual production of a historical period characterized by the coexistence of divergent social formations and their conflicting ideologies. Such an approach is precisely what an analysis of the writing of Sor Juana requires. Rejecting altogether bourgeois epochal categories such as "renaissance" and "baroque", Rodríguez begins by insisting upon the importance of adhering to a discussion of the period of *transition* between feudalism and the appearance of (mercantilist) capitalism. *Theory and History of Ideological Production* engages the texts of the transition according to the ways and degrees to which these produce and reproduce both feudalizing and/or emergent capitalistic ideologies[8]. In many recent discussions of Sor Juana's work, given the predilection for features that resonate with bourgeois ideology and in particular the bourgeois notion of the subject, elements derived from a feudal logic are inadequately engaged and explained. Rodríguez's

[7] Throughout this discussion, I will quote from the Malcolm Read's English translation of Rodríguez's text.

[8] Rodríguez is not the first to insist upon understanding the period in question in terms of a transition between two distinct modes of production, but his work calls attention to the fact that the significance of the transition is often absent in critical literary analysis of texts of this period. This is certainly the case in most texts written on Sor Juana. Silvia Federici's Marxist feminist analysis of women's history in *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* also insists upon the importance of understanding this history as part and parcel of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Her text, with its particular focus on women in the transition, will be considered in Chapter Four.

theoretical contribution provides us with some of the necessary concepts for examining Sor Juana's work according to its own particular and radically historical productive logic while at the same time helping us to understand the historicity of the current critical tendency to over-inflate Sor Juana's subjectivity and interpret her work according to the sincere/rhetorical[9] dichotomy.

At first glance, it may seem that the shift to thinking in terms of the transition is a simplistic one when engaging texts such as those written by Sor Juana, but there is much more at stake than mere terminology. In order to understand this period, its classification as a period of transition between two very distinct historical moments is crucial. While it is true that *the subject* of bourgeois relations will begin to come into fuzzy focus during this period, it is equally true that *the servant* of feudal relations is still alive and kicking and continuing to reproduce itself in many texts even beyond the 17th century. The lack of a theoretical framework that can historicize both *subjectivity* and the *Lord/serf relations* still being produced in the 17th century accounts for the limited explanatory power of the normative criticism describe above.

Although the present discussion is not about identifying the sincere versus the rhetorical in Sor Juana, she must be understood, to borrow the term momentarily, as having been *sincere* in both her service/submission to her superiors as well as in her defense of her actions. At the same time, it is important to recognize that Sor Juana did not understand the contradiction between submission and self-defense in the same way as the bourgeois critics who would later read her works; subversion of the social hierarchy was not Sor Juana's intended goal. Sor Juana was not being ironic, as many of her critics would have it, for example, in her response to the Bishop when she addressed him saying:

> hablo con el salvoconducto de vuestros favores y debajo el seguro de vuestra benignidad, y de que me habéis, como otro Asuero, dado a besar la punta del cetro de

[9] What has to be understood is that the sincere/rhetorical or authentic/inauthentic dichotomy of bourgeois criticism is a false dichotomy, in the sense that it is a historical dichotomy pertaining to bourgeois ideology proper. As such, this dichotomy cannot aid in explaining the logic of the feudalizing elements present in Sor Juana's work. Bourgeois ideology tends to view certain elements as rhetorical and inauthentic when they were anything but rhetorical unto feudal ideology. An effort to comprehend the logic of feudal ideology must be made in order to comprehend the logic of Sor Juana's texts in general. Without a grasp of feudal ideology and its historical functions, a critic is bound to interpret (and distort) feudalizing elements according to the logic and categories internal to bourgeois ideology.

> oro de vuestro cariño en señal de concederme benévola licencia para hablar y proponer en vuestra venerable presencia, digo que recibo en mi alma vuestra santísima amonestación de aplicar el estudio a Libros Sacrados, que aunque viene en traje de consejo, tendrá para mí sustancia de precepto. (*Woman* 23)

While her letter is without a doubt a defense of her actions, it is also an act of submission. She legitimizes her life while at the same time expressing her gratitude and service to her superior, and ultimately, to her Lord. As much as these actions may be historically and ideologically at odds with one another, neither should be read in her text as mere rhetorical device. If Sor Juana dared to question her superiors on certain matters (and she did), her complaint was in some ways not unlike the grievance represented in the story of El Cid in that both express the protest of a servant who maintains that he or she has been wrongfully accused. Sor Juana, like el Cid, would surely be considered a good servant if only her lord were behaving according to his charge. As we shall see, the logic that informs the central theme from *El Cid* embodied in the phrase, "¡Dios, qué buen vasallo, si oviesse buen señor" (*Poema*, 78), is not without echo in Sor Juana's letter to her confessor, Núñez de Miranda. Her complaints against both Núñez de Miranda[10] and the Bishop of Puebla were registered against lords/ecclesiastical superiors who did not properly fulfill their charge as lords/ecclesiastical superiors; Sor Juana accused them, while exercising much caution, of being superiors who had failed to shepherd their servant properly, even to the extent of having unjustly accused her of wrongdoing. Although Sor Juana's particular understanding of the social hierarchy merits a detailed analysis, for now it is important to point out that nowhere in her writing does she challenge the ultimate legitimacy of the feudal social hierarchy. In this sense, the above quote does not embody a mere rhetorical convention nor is it an example of Sor Juana's capacity for irony, but rather a genuine statement of submission to a superior by a servant, categories that determined the entire structure of Sor Juana's life, not to mention the lives of those around her. She may question the actions of a particular superior/lord, but she does not question the

[10] Chapter Four offers a more detailed analysis of the letter Sor Juana wrote to Núñez de Miranda when she decided to stop saying her confessions with him, but for now it is important to disagree with the assertion by her critics that Sor Juana was being ironic in her expressions of faithful servitude in the letter that has come to be called her *Autodefensa espiritual*.

legitimacy of or attempt to subvert the categories of *lord* and *servant,* as many of her critics seem to imply. The double failure to 1) recognize the *Lord/serf relations* operating within the text and 2) to understand *the subject* itself as an historical category still being forged in Sor Juana's moment, has led to critical analysis capable of interpreting the above passage and many others as subversively mocking in tone. What bourgeois criticism can't seem to recognize is the possibility that Sor Juana was as genuine about her will to submit to her superiors as she was about her defense of her actions. For Pamela Kirk, for example, it is "impossible to continue to accept interpretations" of Sor Juana's work "that ignore any hint of subtext or complication of context" (108). Kirk's seemingly innocuous insistence upon the "subtext and complication of context" is an insistence upon the sarcastic and subversive nature of Sor Juana's letter to the Bishop (as well as that of other texts) and leads to yet another reading that encounters an ironic tone in every passage where Sor Juana expresses servitude. For Kirk and so many other contemporary Sor Juana scholars, all critical discourse that regards Sor Juana's expressions of servitude and humility as valid, is deemed antiquated, unsophisticated and simplistic in scope. Present day readers of Sor Juana's work are encouraged to view her as having largely outwitted her superiors through the use of her "manipulating irony" (109). Such an interpretation endows Sor Juana with an impossibly modern perspective and misunderstands her actual historical predicament as an individual whose life was produced according to the logic of two contradictory social systems and also as a woman in a moment when the two systems in question were vying for control of women's bodies.

1.2 The unconscious nature of contradiction

Having identified some of the basic problems associated with normative literary criticism and the specific ways that these problems impact the interpretation of Sor Juana's work, the need for an alternative interpretation should be clear, but the justification for insisting upon an Althusserian Marxist framework for generating a new reading of the nun's textual production still requires further explanation. The value of this suggestion is perhaps better weighed as the reader becomes familiar with the explanatory power of the framework

proposed. The theoretical work of the above mentioned Juan Carlos Rodríguez, as well as that of British Hispanist, Malcolm Read, is very helpful for defining the framework proposed.

In 1974, Rodríguez published his seminal work, *Teoría e historia de la producción ideológica*, a work heavily influenced by Althusser's structural Marxism and one which elaborates a theory of literature predicated upon the concept of the *ideological unconscious.* Like Althusser, Rodríguez constructed his theoretical model of causality based upon the notion that there are three main levels (or moments) present in any given social formation: *the economic*, *the political* and *the ideological*. Both theorists adhered to a nonreductive understanding of economic determinism in which the economic level is always determinant in the last instance, but also in which, at any moment, any one of the three levels may be dominant. Malcolm Read, working within the same theoretical problematic, explains that Althusser's notion of *structural causality*, a concept which understands social formations as constituted by various structures or levels, "refers to the reciprocal influence at work between the elements of a social formation" (*Matrix*). Ultimately, this set of causal relations "consists of the transference of systemic energies to individual constituents, including individual consciousness" (*Matrix*). Although each of the separate levels operates according to what Althusser terms a certain "relative autonomy", (which can in part account for the uneven development of the structural whole), all three levels are always already over-determined by the economic mode of production they serve to constitute. It was Althusser's assertion that any given set of social relations naturally secretes an ideology (at the level of individual consciousness) that serves, as Rodríguez describes it, to "grease" the particular set of social relations to which it belongs. As Read explains, however, to speak of ideology is not to speak of a consciously held set of beliefs, (although these would also pertain) but rather, ideology is understood here as a level of being, crucial to existence within a social formation. Rodríguez describes ideology as socially indispensable, as necessary as skin with respect to one's capacity to participate in society; it is precisely because of its fundamental quality that the members of a given social formation are largely unaware of its operations.

To fully comprehend the ways in which Althusser and especially Rodríguez understand the role of ideology with respect to social formations, it is necessary to take into consideration

both the transhistorical and historical nature and functions of ideology. For the sake of clarification, it may be helpful to differentiate, for the time being, between *Ideology* with a capital "I" and *ideology* (or plural ideolo*gies)* with a lower-case "i". *Ideology* can be understood as referring to a transhistorical aspect of the ideological, in so far as the *Ideological Level* is present in any given social formation, as a level of being or existence. At the same time, each social formation or mode of production is characterized by its own particular historical *ideology*. If the basic and transhistorical function of *Ideology* is to grease the system, a specific historical *ideology* serves to produce/legitimize/grease a particular, historical system. It should go without saying that ultimately these two levels or aspects of ideology can never be separated or exist apart from one another, but knowledge of them is be helpful for grasping the direction of Rodríguez's theoretical contribution. In his work, both the transhistorical and historical roles of ideology are captured in his central notion of the *ideological unconscious* through which he explores ideology as a condition of human society and at the same time as historically and radically constrained by the particular set of social relations it produces and reproduces at the discursive level. The *ideological unconscious* refers to nothing less than what Read describes as "the infrastructural conditions of existence that determine, intransitively, the capacity of the individual to act within the field of economic, political or ideological relations" (*Matrix*).

In his recently published book, *The Literary Theory of Juan Carlos Rodríguez* (2008), Juan Caamaño explains that it is precisely in the terrain of ideology where Rodríguez further advances the work of Marx and Althusser alike, and the field of historical materialism in general. For Caamaño, "If Althusserianism embodies the most advanced form of historical materialism, then Rodríguez's *theory of ideological production* represents the most advanced theory of ideology in Marxism" (6). As Caamaño's book illustrates, Althusser's great breakthrough was to implode the classical bourgeois understanding of ideology as a conscious and self-evident process. What Althusser was able to perceive was, in fact, the transhistorical and unconscious (or *always already there*) nature of *Ideology*, but the further historicization of *ideology* would be left for Rodríguez to undertake. If Althusser was the first to theorize the transhistorical and unconscious dimensions of *Ideology* (or the *Ideological Level*), the unique

contribution of Rodríguez was to be the historicization of particular ideological matrices, in other words, the theorization of a chronology of *radically historical ideologies*.

The potential impact of Rodríguez's theoretical contribution with respect to the arena of Sor Juana scholarship is easy to begin to discern when one considers that *Theory and History* theorizes the logic of ideological production in Spain between the 14th and 16th centuries including a discussion of the resurgence of dominant feudal relations (and feudal ideology) at the end of the 16th century. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Rodríguez's framework provides us with concepts useful for examining the textual production of the period of transition between feudalism and capitalism in that his work seeks to isolate the distinct historical ideologies vying for dominance during this period. Rodríguez's notion of the *ideological unconscious* makes it plain that the contradictions that bourgeois scholarship struggles to explain in texts such as those written by Sor Juana and her contemporaries should be understood as a result of the historical struggle for dominance between two radically historical social formations.

While the modern bourgeois individual/critic has *Ideology* or the (unconscious) experience of the *Ideological Level* in common with Sor Juana, the historical *ideologies* that characterize her moment and our own are very different. Although this point seems a very obvious one, Sor Juana critics consistently fail to adhere to this premise. The mistake traced thus far in much criticism on Sor Juana is one that involves the assumption of transparency between the ideological production of distinct historical moments, the assumption that diverse texts from very different historical periods all contain within them evidence of a universal and transhistorical human nature[11]. As Rodríguez explains, every historical ideological matrix tends to project its own fundamental categories onto other matrices as it strives to reflect and legitimize itself at all times. In the case of bourgeois criticism on Sor Juana, the tendency to convert Sor Juana into a modern subject is very easy to identify. Just as soon as the text identifies Sor Juana as "a woman ahead of her time" or "mired in the baroque", the process has begun. Once again, Stephanie Merrrim's most recent book on Sor Juana provides a good

[11]Rodríguez explains that *human nature* is another term familiar to the bourgeois ideological matrix and used to refer to the free subject of bourgeois relations. Again, the impetus to universalize and transhistoricize its fundamental categories is part of the way any given social formation legitimizes and maintains itself.

example of a text that mentions the contradictions of the period and expresses a desire to ground Sor Juana historically, but ultimately lacks the necessary framework.

Merrim begins the first chapter of her book on Sor Juana with a thorough yet somewhat standard passage describing the contradictory realities of the 17th century. In this introduction, she lists a series of contradictory forces to be taken into consideration when examining work produced during the course of this century, and following George Mariscal's *Contradictory Subjects,* Merrim describes 17th century Spain and New Spain as characterized by "ideological clashes between dominant, emergent, and residual elements, clashes that gathered around issues such as bloodlines, virtue, wealth, family and capitalism" (*Early* 3). Merrim affirms Mariscal's assertion that this period was marked by an intense rivalry between competing ideologies which resulted in and was played out through what Mariscal terms "contradictory subjects" (4), but just as quickly as she introduces the idea of rival discourses or ideologies she backs away from entering this discussion and rapidly dissolves all rival discourses into what she calls "the baroque chiaroscuro of seventeenth-century Spain" (4). By the end of the first paragraph Merrim has delineated a list of binary oppositions unanchored in any theoretical framework except for the ambiguous umbrella category of *the baroque* and by the end of her text she has still not engaged the issue of "contradictory subjects" in a precise and meaningful way. The preliminary appeal to notions of causality and the insistence upon the importance of examining the role of the contradictory forces active in the 17th century lead the reader to expect a more thorough explanation of Sor Juana's difficult and contradictory textual production. Merrim's text, in spite of moments of real insight, remains decidedly more descriptive than explanatory. On the contrary, representing a radical alternative, Rodríguez's work on literary production is crucial for theorizing transitional texts like Sor Juan's precisely because it takes us to the very heart of the "ideological clashes" that Merrim mentions but ultimately neglects to elucidate in her critical analysis (3).

The central problem in many critical texts is that the object of study—*the subject*—is *assumed* before the work has begun, and what's more, it is understood as a universal given. The critic expects to find a subject and therefore will find a subject, no matter what it takes. Little or no consideration is given to the fact that the final object is, in reality, a product of the

critique. Just as the tendency to parse Sor Juana's textual production into sincere versus rhetorical expression is a symptom of critical analysis informed by a strong bourgeois ideological bias, the same can be said of most discussions of the notion of subjectivity as it relates to Sor Juana's work. The issue of subjectivity is mentioned in an array of texts on Sor Juana and on the Early Modern Period in general, but in most cases the problems are discussed (at best) in terms of *contradictory subject positions* in a manner that tends to confuse the unconscious ideological level with the conscious level of political action; in such an equation, what are understood as differing subject positions are almost always described as consciously opposing one another. We can see this understanding of subjectivity at work in multiple critiques of Sor Juana that describe her as acutely aware of her own situation and the array of problems/contradictions plaguing her moment, her stance with respect to such realities always considered a conscious one.

The following are but a few examples of critical insistence upon Sor Juana's hyper awareness. In her text on the nun, Sabat de Rivers describes Sor Juana as a representative of the American Baroque who lived "en relación con lo histórico y lo social, en un angustioso mundo de opciones condicionadas a través de las cuales se iba formando a sí misma" (38). The implication in this passage is that Sor Juana was keenly aware of the processes taking place as she constructed her sense of selfhood. There is, admittedly, a moment of hesitation in Sabat de River's analysis when she states that Sor Juana was presented with "opciones condicionadas"; at this point it seems that the critic is willing to concede a bit of causality to entities other than Sor Juana herself. In the end, however, there is no holistic theory of causality or ideology to guide us, and the subject that Sabat de Rivers describes is unmistakably regarded as self-determining. Stephanie Merrim also describes Sor Juana as acutely aware of her historical and contradictory situation as "a woman painfully in touch with her problematic place in the world. Sor Juana did not fail to recognize the incongruity of her position as a woman, a nun, an intellectual and a writer. More than merely recognizing her anomaly, Sor Juana drew attention to it" (29). The general critical gesture is the same. Sor Juana is described as simultaneously aware of the contradictions of her life, determined to do something about her situation, and fully in control of the discourse she produces. In the same vein, Pamela Kirk also envisions the

nun as having a heightened sensitivity and ability to manipulate language accordingly. Kirk tells us that

> Sor Juana has become adept at rhetorical tactics to subvert common perceptions. Previous chapters have demonstrated various ways she sought to destabilize discourse using devices such as parody, allegory, and mimicry of accepted modes of women's behavior. (96-7)

Each of these critics describes Sor Juana's historical predicament and indeed her "self-fashioning" as having to do primarily with issues related to patriarchy and misogyny, issues that are understood by many such critics as largely transhistorical. The construction of subjectivity in this kind of critical analysis has to do with the conscious construction of an oppositional voice, in the case of Sor Juana, the construction of a discourse that challenged the misogyny of her superiors. Subjectivity is not treated by most Sor Juana scholars as a radically historical phenomenon that develops as a category necessary for bourgeois relations, but rather as a natural and transhistorical, recurring event. Because normative criticism focuses so intently upon the conscious/political level, it tends to read Sor Juana's texts as highly politicized discourse, more as the result of a conscious/political process than as ushering from ideological/unconscious categories. At the same time, ironically enough, because the transition between feudalism and capitalism is not so easily deciphered at the conscious/political level in Sor Juana's writing, its presence in the text goes largely unnoticed. In most cases, the real politics of the moment are absent in the analysis. Sor Juana is presented as having comprehended fully the backwardness of the thinking of the men surrounding her and her letter to the Bishop especially is interpreted as the evidence of her painful (and political) attempt to fight back. While it may be true that Sor Juana perceived the heightened misogyny of her moment and indeed knew the risk she took when she crafted an answer to the Bishop, what must be questioned is the critical tendency *to constantly elevate the contradictions in Sor Juana's work to the conscious and political level*[12].

[12] The attempt to read ironic intent in Sor Juana's text, as discussed in the previous section of this chapter, can also be understood as a symptom of the tendency of bourgeois criticism to elevate all contradictions in her work to the conscious/political level.

Merrim, for example, goes on to assert that Sor Juana was "keenly attuned to the baroque mechanisms that had produced her fame" and that she "played into them and played with them" (*Early* 31). Again, Sor Juana is portrayed as fully in control of all that constitutes her writing. Both Merrim and Kirk emphasize over and over the intentional rebelliousness of Sor Juana's writing. Merrim calls Sor Juana "the transgressive nun" (30) and Kirk, speaking of Sor Juana's letter to the Bishop, points to "Sor Juana's awareness of the transgressive nature of this particular act of writing" (97). The level of transgressiveness described by these critics implies that Sor Juana was able to question on a very fundamental level everything she knew and everything her superiors said; in both Merrim and Kirk's texts Sor Juana is often portrayed in a manner that causes the reader to wonder if she was actually a believing Catholic or not. Given the overwhelming concurrence among contemporary Sor Juana scholars upon the reality of the nun's transgressive personality, one hesitates to challenge this view, but if we indulge the possibility, even for a moment, that 1) Sor Juana took very seriously her identity as a nun and servant of the Lord, and 2) she was not nearly as aware of the contradictions in her text as her critics would have it, the suggestion that she was intentionally transgressive becomes suspect.

It seems worthwhile to note at this point that scholarship on Sor Juana has not always interpreted the nun as a highly transgressive individual, able and intending to subvert the thinking of her superiors. Mexican scholar, Mendéz Plancarte, whose 1950's edition of Sor Juana's complete works remains a fundamental resource for Sor Juana scholarship today, would have disagreed thoroughly with the notion that the nun was transgressive. Hence, whereas much of present-day criticism on Sor Juana seeks to separate the sincere from the artificial, Méndez Plancarte maintained that the nun was always sincere in her writing. He asserts very plainly in the introduction to the second volume of the *Obras Completas de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: 2: Villancicos y Letras Sacras* that the liturgical compositions compiled in this text are every bit as personal and sincere, if not even more so, as Sor Juana's lyric poetry. The following citation is from the opening section of Méndez Plancarte's edition of the *Villancicos y Letras Sacras*. His position is clear:

> Nuestro tomo anterior—decíamoslo ya–solo "a falta de un título mejor" salió con el de Lírica Personal, por no decir "unipersonal". Pero ésta—la Coral o colectiva, de los

> Villancicos y Letras Sacras–es, en rigor, tan personal como aquélla, y sin duda que a veces mucho más, desde que aquí, a pesar de invitaciones ocasionales, siempre hay más absoluta sinceridad en todos los matices de emoción y de pensamiento. (vii)

Méndez Plancarte's description of Sor Juana as the most devout of Catholics might not surprise us given the fact that he was also an ordained Catholic priest, but the enormous distance between Méndez Plancarte's position and that of contemporary criticism should give pause for thought. While there are problems to be addressed regarding Méndez Plancarte's positivist/humanist presentation of Sor Juana, his basic assertion that Sor Juana was in fact a sincere Catholic is important to recognize. Her more recent transformation into a transgressive figure *par excellence* is simply misplaced.

What has to be insisted upon, in direct contrast to the analyses produced by normative bourgeois criticism, is that the contradictions in Sor Juana's writing were most often not contradictions produced at the conscious political level, but rather contradictions produced at the unconscious ideological level. In normative criticism, the contradictions in her texts are construed as conscious transgressions against the church hierarchy, but such an understanding overly inflates Sor Juana's subjectivity (distorting the history of the subject itself) as well as the limits of her individual agency[13], allowing little room for the role of the *ideological unconscious*. One of the best ways to grasp the function of *Ideology* is to examine the function and distinguishing characteristics of historical *ideologies*. A good understanding of the battle going on at the ideological level during the period of the transition is essential for addressing the problem of contradictions in Sor Juana's work in order to avoid falling into the trap of constantly elevating the ideological battle to the political and conscious level. The idea is to comprehend her textual production as representing a confluence of contradictory ideological forces that she couldn't help but mediate in her writing given the fact that these discourses informed the very ideological matrix in which she existed, a matrix in which both feudalizing

[13] The insistence upon establishing agency and/or self-determination that characterizes many recent critical texts on Sor Juana is yet another manifestation of a bourgeois ideology that will always uphold the transhistorical nature of the subject. Because the subject of bourgeois relations is precisely what bourgeois criticism is designed to perpetuate, critics are forced to go to great lengths to demonstrate that Sor Juana was in fact in control of her texts.

and modernizing bourgeois ideologies were in play. Again, Rodríguez's theoretical work on this period is of great help for working out the dynamics of this radically historical situation.

1.3 Substantialism and animism in the text

According to Althusser, ideology always produced and was reproduced by *subjects*, but Rodríguez considered this an error as he comprehended that pre-capitalistic modes of production did not in fact produce subjects nor did pre-capitalistic individuals operate according to the logic of the subject. For Rodríguez, it was clear that the feudal economic system produced Lord/serf relations at the level of interactions between individuals while the capitalist system produced Subject/subject relations, and it is here where the project of *Theory and History* began, a project that set out to theorize the historical production of both serf and subject. Having already determined that the *ideologies* of distinct social formations are historically constrained and therefore produce diverse historical social class identities dependent upon the logic of the particular system in question, Rodríguez opted to examine what happens in the field of ideological production when two modes of production, namely, feudalism and capitalism, cohabit the same historical period. Perhaps not surprisingly, he discovered a world of contradiction, for the texts he set out to analyze were characterized not only by the contradictions internal to each said mode of production, but also by the contradictions and class struggle inherent in the historical battle between feudalism and capitalism, both of which were vying for supremacy and control. In other words, the contradictions present in the textual production of the transition include Lord/serf (the basic feudal contradiction), Subject/subject (the basic bourgeois contradiction) contradictions, but also the contradiction, at the level of social formations (modes of production), between feudalism and capitalism. The result, as Rodríguez explains, was often the intervention or even impregnation of one ideology upon another (Read, "Changing" 4). Borrowing his terms from Bachelard but simultaneously reinvesting them with new meaning, Rodríguez identified two main ideological matrices present in the transition, *substantialism* and *animism*[14]. The

[14]For a more detailed discussion of the importance of Bachelard in the work of Althusser, see pages 176-181 of

following paragraphs outline the important features of each of these matrices enabling us to begin observing their incidence in the work of Sor Juana.

By the time Sor Juana took up her pen, the direction of the process of the transition from feudalism to capitalism had been somewhat reversed as feudalizing forces had regained hegemony in Spain and New Spain alike and were struggling to repress the impact of the economic, political and ideological ruptures that feudalism suffered during the previous two centuries. The complexity and contradiction that characterize Sor Juana's writing arise in part from the fact that it represents a fusion of elements particular to the two distinct ideological matrices present in the transition, *substantialism,* or the ideological matrix of feudalism, and *animism,* which is of early bourgeois extraction. As Read explains,

> The task that *Teoría e historia* sets itself is to chart the course of the conflict, not at the economic level, although the latter's relevance is always implicit, nor at the political level, although Rodríguez devotes considerable attention to the dynamics of the Absolutist State, but at the ideological or, more specifically, literary level. Here, after its initial successes, animism is forced onto the defensive by a substantialism fed, in the last instance, by the resurgence of feudalism. ("Changing" 6)

As Read's quote suggests, when two modes of production came into contact with one another, the battle for dominance was waged at every level of the social formation. Although this project focuses primarily, like that of Rodríguez, on the ideological (and literary) level, it is worth reiterating that the relative autonomy of the ideological, political and economic levels does not imply that they can be understood as fully independent of one another. Because it is ultimately the mode of production (the economic level) which determines, in the last instance, the specific features of the political and ideological levels, ideological matrices will always be defined first and foremost (or in the last instance) according to the particular mode of production which secretes them.

Althusser and the Renewal of Marxist Social Theory by Robert Paul Resch. For a summary of Bachelard's specific influence in the work of Rodríguez, see Malcolm Read's article, "Ideologies of the Spanish Transition Revisited: Juan Huarte de San Juan, Juan Carlos Rodríguez and Noam Chomsky" published in 2004 in *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*.

As we have seen, the feudal mode of production produced social relations that functioned according the hierarchical logic of the Lord/serf dynamic while the capitalistic mode would eventually produce relations based on the notion of the free subject articulated in the form of Subject/subject relations. Each of these economically determined sets of social relationships is characterized by a specific ideological matrix that serves to legitimate its terms. *Substantialism*, or the dominant ideology of the feudal mode of production, conceives of the world as made up of substantial forms organized according to a divine hierarchy in which each substance has and tends toward its natural place. Under substantialism "there are diverse souls which inform diverse matters—animal, vegetable, and human," and society is understood as an organic body in which each individual occupies his or her God-given place (Read, "Ideologies" 318). Each offers service to one's lord according to his or her station. Life itself is understood as a journey back to God with death representing a birth into eternal life. The physical human body is considered unfavorably given its association with sin and decay, and as a result "the notions of blood and bleeding are thus key concepts," inextricably related to "those of vengeance and the cleansing of honor" (319). In the feudal world, sin must be paid for and honor cleansed by the shedding of blood. Because the world and everything in it is understood in terms of an imperfect reflection of the heavens, substantialist books function according to the same logic; they are allegorical texts that serve to reflect the divine order found in either the Book of God or the Book of Nature. A literal perspective (i.e. a *subjective* perspective) does not exist in these texts as there is no individual I/eye that sees outside of the eye of God. *Animism*, on the other hand, which begins with the emergence of mercantilist relations, is very distinct from substantialism as it will serve to grease a very different set of social relations. Representing a distinct ideological system which opposes substantialist notions, animism serves at the ideological level toward the production of the category of the subject, and in turn, because of the historical conjuncture, toward the eradication of the feudal categories of the Lord and serf.

In light of even just this basic description of substantialist ideology, it is apparent that Sor Juana's body of writing does not conform wholly or consistently to the logic of feudal textual production and therefore cannot be described as exclusively substantialist. In her letter

to the Bishop, for example, it is clear that the first person perspective has largely taken the place of the eye of God and that this particular text no longer conforms solely to the allegorical norm of substantialism, although allegoric logic is by no means entirely absent here either. On the one hand, Sor Juana makes many very literal observations regarding the world around her in a way that would have been impossible for an unadulterated substantialist perspective, but at the same time, there is still a very obvious substantialist/feudalizing logic also operating throughout the letter that is embodied, in part, in the very same passages that the critics discussed earlier in this chapter so often identify as merely rhetorical or even as ironic. Again, the passage discussed earlier in this chapter in which Sor Juana moves from a very literal description of her interaction with the spinning top to a more substantialist and allegorical reading of the shape of the triangle is a good example of the way that the allegorical eye of substantialism is mingled in her texts with the perspectivism characteristic of emerging bourgeois ideology.

Readings that view *La Respuesta* as teeming with ironic intent make it nearly impossible to perceive the feudalizing logic in the text; if feudal logic is mentioned at all it is usually in order to say that it has been subverted. Although Sor Juana was clearly very agile in her ability to defend herself in terms that she must have judged to be agreeable to her superiors, her agility should not be confused with irony or patronizing intent. The matter of her defense was a delicate one; given the widespread clampdown and persecution of women that characterized her moment, she was certainly under pressure to choose her words carefully, but at the same time, it also seems quite reasonable that a nun who had a desire to study and to write ended up generating a defense in which study and writing were comprehended as part of a God-given nature that led to the pursuit of an ecclesiastical life. That such a basic summary of Sor Juana's arguments is necessary here is remarkable given the number of critical analyses of her work, but in most cases, a discussion of even the most obvious of feudalizing themes is absent.

One of the basic historical contradictions in play throughout her letter, and perhaps the reason for which contemporary critics so often mistakenly insist upon reading Sor Juana's letter as a document infused with a pungent irony, is the contradiction between two distinct historical configurations of the act of writing—writing as a display of personal merit (the bourgeois

concept of author) versus writing construed as service to one's lord and ultimately to God (embodied in the figures of the scholastic and the feudal scribe). Sor Juana's textual production consistently blends these two contradictory understandings of writing, and her letter is in many ways an attempt to work out this contradiction (at the level of the ideological unconscious), representing in itself a contradictory attempt to defend her status as poet (an animist category) by inscribing it within the feudal/substantailist logic of service to one's lord. Writing is described over and again in Sor Juana's letter as a fundamentally tributary act; when Sor Juana has to explain the function of the act of writing, she always defines it in substantialist terms. Thus the multiple references to the danger of pride, the nervousness about having her name attached to her writing (she will insist that this was never of her own volition), and the shying away from any arguments that defend her writing as having to do with personal merit. The following is but one of the many references to the danger of the sin of pride that Sor Juana includes in her letter: "Lo cual se hacía porque en medio de tanta honra no se desvaneciese el vencedor, y porque el lastre de estas afrentas hiciese contrapeso a las velas de tanto aplausos, para que no peligrase la nave del juicio entre los vientos de las aclamaciones" (*Woman* 95). The nervousness about authorship also appears throughout the letter: "Y así, en lo poco que se ha impreso mío, no solo mi nombre, pero ni el consentimiento para la impresión ha sido dictamen propio" (97). And finally, she includes the following verse in Latin in her final arguments where insists that individual talents are a gift from God: "*Quid autem habes quod non accepisti? Si autem accepisti, quid gloriaris quasi non acceperis?"* (95)[15].

At the same time, however, Sor Juana will also admit that she can see no fault in the composition of verses, that is, no fault in an activity that was fundamentally antithetical to the feudalizing logic that she otherwise deployed in her defense of her writing. In the following lines Sor Juana admits her failure to understand why poetry should be so frowned upon by so many of her superiors. Here Sor Juana's contradictory struggle to combine her status as poet with her role as nun/servant of her lord is visible:

> Pues si vuelvo los ojos a la tan perseguida habilidad de hacer versos—que en mi es tan natural, que aun me violento para que esta carta no lo sean, y pudiera decir aquello de

[15] The following is Peden's translation into English of the Latin phrase above: "Or what hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why does thou glory as if thou hadsnt not received it?" (94).

Quidquid conabar dicere, versus erat–, viéndola condenar a tantos y acriminar, he buscado muy de propósito cuál sea el daño que pueden tener, y no he hallado. (87)

What should be clear is that although she was not consciously aware of the nature of the contradiction represented in her writing, she was in fact obligated to go to great lengths in order to demonstrate her adherence to scholastic norms. As Read explains, "In the last instance it is not the experience of individual agents that counts as much as the relevant ideological unconscious, operative on an ontological level that transcends that of the individual" (*Latin* 10). The problem was always that Sor Juana was attempting to remain a *servant* while effectively participating in a new form of writing (bourgeois poetic production) that had emerged with the category of the *subject* and served toward its reproduction. Sor Juana deployed a form of bourgeois ideological production within a context that was still heavily mired in feudal Lord/serf relations, and the results are plain to see. By and large, her texts represent a sort of contradictory ideological hybrid. In her letter to the Bishop, it is apparent that she was able to simultaneously conceive of herself as poet and as a servant. The contradictions (at the level of the ideological unconscious) do cause dissonance in her text, but again, this should not lead us to interpret her as having been highly ironic. The present argument disagrees with the critical trend that modernizes and inflates Sor Juana's subjectivity to the point of generating a somewhat clichéd portrait of a modern struggling artist (poet) trapped in the body of a 17th century nun whose only recourse for expression of her true sentiments was to put on the mask of irony[16]. This kind of analysis utterly misrecognizes the ideological contradictions in her texts. Far from an ironic subversion of feudal ideology, there is a still feudalizing/substantialist logic that provides the basic organizational structure for Sor Juana's letter to the Bishop and informs her attempts to defend her actions. Recognizing this very basic fact represents the first step toward ultimately working out the particular logic of her self-defense, her definition and defense of writing, and eventually, her radically historical defense of women.

[16] Again, the inability to historicize the subject is apparent. Sor Juana becomes in such critiques the quintessential artist, a sensitive soul battling the backwardness of her historical moment. The artistic soul is eternal. The historical moment is reduced in such arguments to context with little bearing on the text.

The still feudalizing logic that informs the structure of Sor Juana's text is evidenced throughout her letter (and in her writing in general) as she acknowledges her respect for and willingness to submit to the authority of her superiors in frequent gestures that serve to reaffirm the feudal social hierarchy according to the logic of the organic body. Although Sor Juana humbles herself using phrases that may sound affected to the modern reader, they are the very ideological fabric that produced and defined her as a member of the still feudal social hierarchy. Early in her letter to the Bishop, Sor Juana expresses her gratitude to her superior as well as her submission to her lord (ecclesiastical superior) in the following manner:

> Así yo, Señora mía, solo responderé que no sé qué responder; solo agradeceré diciendo que no soy capaz de agradeceros; y diré, por breve rótulo de lo que dejo al silencio, que sólo con la confianza de favorecida y con los valimientos de honrada me puedo atrever a hablar con vuestra grandeza. Si fuera necedad, perdonadla, pues es alhaja de la dicha, y en ella ministraré yo más materia a vuestra benignidad y vos daréis mejor forma a mi reconocimiento. (*Woman* 21)

Throughout her letter, Sor Juan clearly wishes to express her intent to act as a humble and obedient servant, not only of her earthly superiors but of God as well. From the very beginning, she will insist that her writing, the cause for her being chastised, was always conducted as a matter of obedience. Sor Juana insists time and again in her letter that her writing is a natural impulse, the *nature* of the individual being understood here as *God-given*; according to the nun, her writing is not a matter of stubborn volition or even of merit but one of dual obligation, consisting of the obligation to obey her God-given nature as well as the obligation to obey the petitions of her superiors:

> El escribir nunca ha sido dictamen propio, sino fuerza ajena; que les pudiera decir con verdad: *Vos me coegistis*. Lo que sí es verdad que no negaré (lo uno porque es notorio a todos, y lo otro porque, aunque sea contra mí, me ha hecho Dios la merced de darme grandísimo amor a la verdad) es que desde que me rayó la primera luz de la razón, fue tan vehemente y poderosa la inclinación a las letras, que ni ajenas reprensiones—que he tenido muchas–, ni propias reflejas—que he hecho no pocas–, han bastado a que

deje de seguir este natural impulso que Dios puso en mí: Su Majestad sabe por qué y para qué; (27)

Although she cannot know why God chose to give her such a nature, she is sure that her earthly duty is to employ her nature in the service of her Lord. Accordingly, Sor Juana frequently describes both her relationship with the Bishop (Sor Filotea) and her relationship with her heavenly Father in terms of the debt she owes them. She offers her letter and all of her writing in general in tributary fashion to her superior: "Si algunas otras cosas escribiere, siempre irán a buscar el sagrado de vuestras plantas y el seguro de vuestra corrección, pues no tengo otra alhaja con que pagaros" (97-9). Time and again her writing is presented in the letter as *an offering* that she makes in service to her superiors both in the palace and in the Church, and ultimately to God. Because of the problems it has caused her with certain earthly authorities, she has even attempted to offer her study and writing only to God. What is important to notice here is that even when she vows to make her study and writing a solitary practice she still understands that it should be done in obedience and as an offering to her Lord:

> y sabe que le he pedido que apague la luz de mi entendimiento dejando sólo lo que baste para guardar su Ley, […] Sabe también Su Majestad que no consiguiendo esto, he intentado sepultar con mi nombre mi entendimiento, y sacrificársele sólo a quien me lo dio; y no con otro motivo me entró en religión. (27)

In the end, however, all attempts from within and from without to stifle the nun's God-given nature have proven futile. She even admits that to bury her nature would have been "tentación" (26-7) and she describes various moments in her life when she was required to relinquish her books as comparable to being subjected to "el fuego de la persecución, al crisol del tormento" (59). When she was sick, prohibiting her from reading only made her condition worse:

> Y en una ocasión que, por un grave accidente de estómago, me prohibieron los médicos el estudio, pasé así algunos días, y luego les propuse que era menos dañoso el concedérmelos, porque eran tan fuertes y vehementes mis cogitaciones que consumían más espíritus en un cuarto de hora que el estudio de los libros en cuatro días. (63)

Sor Juana describes not only her own recognition and ultimate acceptance of her God-given nature, but she also describes in the passage above the concessions that even her doctors had to make to accommodate her nature. The substantialist logic that informs these arguments is plain: each substance (each individual) in the feudal world is informed by its substantial make-up and has and tends toward its natural place, and what has originally come from God must eventually flow back to him. Her obedience to her nature completes the cycle; God gave her an ability, and she is expected to return it to him as an offering: "Que es bizarría del acreedor generoso dar al deudor pobre, con que pueda satisfacer su deuda" (99). Although her letter never states its logical conclusion in quite such plain terms, it is evident that her readers are meant to intuit that all of Sor Juana's efforts (as well as the efforts of others to silence her) to hide her facility for making verses have failed simply because it is part of her God-given nature that she has been called upon to fulfill. The entire letter is predicated upon the intent to demonstrate that her writing cannot have been disobedience because it 1) is a God-given attribute, literally part of her very substance and 2) she has always placed it at the service of her superiors, with the exception (according to herself) of only one small trifle of self-indulgence, a poem called *Primero sueño: "*Demás, que yo nunca he escrito cosa alguna por mi voluntad, sino por ruegos y preceptos ajenos; de tal manera que no me acuerdo haber escrito por mi gusto si no es un papelillo que llaman El sueño" (89).

If on the whole the fundamental structure of Sor Juana's letter to the Bishop builds upon a still very feudalizing logic that incorporates the themes of humility, confession, service to one's superiors, the paying of tribute, the offering of gifts, and the will to obedience, the same feudalizing/substantialist logic can also often be identified at a more particular level in the way that Sor Juana comprehends certain concepts. In spite of the fact that the literal eye characteristic of bourgeois perspectivism is already operating in her text, she continues to read certain signs and develop certain concepts according to substantialist logic.

At the beginning of the letter, for example, there is an intricate and perhaps perplexing passage in which Sor Juana addresses the issue of silence as she endeavors to explain why she decided it would be wrong for her to have remained silent after receiving the Bishop's admonition. What is important to notice in this passage is that not only is her contemplation of

guarding silence before her superior indicative of the logic of the feudal hierarchy still operating in the text, but Sor Juana's obvious struggle to define the role of silence occurs precisely because there are two distinct logics already operating in her text. The concept of silence (like so many other categories) is itself necessarily undergoing a radical transformation during the period of the transition, and Sor Juana's text provides evidence of the changes taking place. Although Sor Juana seems to be at least viscerally aware of the possibility of the pregnant, i.e. politically inflected, kind of silence that functions according to the logic of the public/private split characteristic of bourgeois ideology, the definition of silence that she is ultimately able to produce in her writing is predictably one that follows substantialist/scholastic logic. As a result, her decision to write to the Bishop (to break her silence) is also explained in the text according to a feudalizing substantialist logic that understands silence in terms of its substance, and its misuse as sin. In the following passage, Sor Juana at first seems nervous about the misinterpretation of a pregnant silence, that if she chooses not to respond to the Bishop she will be interpreted as making a statement by not making one. That silence should function in this way, however, is ultimately unacceptable to Sor Juana, and she is therefore obligated to revise her definition of silence even within the same text. The result is a very knotty passage. She begins by explaining that her initial lack of response was only a sign of her reverence for her superior:

> Y si veo que preguntando el Ángel de las Escuelas, Santo Tomás, de su silencio con Alberto Magno, su maestro, respondió que callaba porque nada sabía decir digno de Alberto, con cuánta mayor razón no callaría, no como el Santo de humildad, sino que la realidad es no saber algo digno de vos […] Perdonad, Señora mía, la digresión que me arrebató la fuerza de la verdad; y si la he de confesar toda, también es buscar efugios para huir la dificultad de responder, y casi me he determinado a dejarlo al silencio; pero como éste es cosa negativa, aunque explica mucho con el énfasis de no explicar, es necesario ponerle algún breve rótulo para que se entienda lo que se pretende que el silencio diga; y si no, dirá nada el silencio, porque ése es su propio oficio: decir nada. (15-9)

That Sor Juana finds it difficult to define the role of silence is easy to perceive in this contradictory passage, but perhaps not as easy to explain. Does silence *say without saying* or is silence *the very substance that expresses nothing*? Sor Juana seems to suggest that both kinds of silence can exist, but then contradicts herself when she finally determines that silence has but one true office. By the end of the passage Sor Juana seems to conclude that only silence that signals *nothing* is truly (unflawed) silence. And for this reason, Sor Juana is obligated to respond to the Bishop. Her silence is a pregnant one, and she does have a response. Given this situation, to hide her thoughts, just as to hide her talents would be giving in to temptation. Sor Juana's still substantializing understanding of the concept of silence cannot admit the possibility of a pregnant silence without associating it with sin; this particular kind of silence is "cosa negativa". Silence that conceals, silence that serves a purpose other than to "decir nada", implies a hiding practice that can only be understood according to scholasticism as transgression. Within the feudal world, the practice of hiding can only be understood in negative terms, as one would have to be hiding from God. If in substantialist texts the eye of God represents the only perspective, hiding from this gaze would have to be inconceivable, not to mention foolish. The biblical example of Cain illustrates the point well.

While Sor Juana's letter to the Bishop, narrated in the first person, is not an example of a purely substantialist text, a substantializing perspective is still present. The contradictory nature of the text evidences the historical process of the transition from feudalism to capitalism that ultimately necessitated the dissolving of the substantialist logic that informs the above passage from Sor Juana's text. The effort she must make in order to formulate what in the end remains a contradictory definition of silence points to the fact that Sor Juana's world is already marked by what Rodríguez refers to as the "non-substantialism of signs" (*Theory* 85-7). For the emerging bourgeois ideology, silence will be understood as the prerogative of the private individual—one will eventually have *the right to remain silent*. Sor Juana had no such right nor could she have imagined the possibility. The logic of confession adheres to the logic that defined the feudal world in which the eye of God was the dominant perspective. In spite of the apparent contradictions in the text, Sor Juana was unable to define silence without appealing to

scholastic understanding, and in her letter she continues to *read the signs*, including silence, in substantialist terms.

> Sor Juana finishes this particular passage on silence in the following manner:
> Fue arrebatado el Sagrado Vaso de Elección al tercer Cielo, y habiendo visto los arcanos secretos de Dios, dice: *Audivit arcana Deí, quae non licet homini loqui*. No dice lo que vio, pero dice que no se puede decir; de manera que aquellas cosas que no se pueden decir, es menester decir siquiera que no se pueden decir, para que se entienda que el callar no es haber qué decir, sino no caber en las voces lo mucho que hay que decir. (*Woman* 19-21)[17]

According to this passage, the hidden things of God are very different from the things that men hide. God hides secrets too great for men to comprehend; men, on the other hand, attempt to hide that which is unsightly, namely their sin, from God and other men. It is important to note the emphasis in the passage above on the fact that even what is hidden must be identified as *that which is hidden*. The feudal opposition between shadow and light, an opposition between sin and spotlessness is clearly at work here. Not only is Sor Juana's final definition of silence a substantializing one, but her response to the Bishop is also an effort to avoid the sin of hiding her thoughts. Further into the letter she insists that nothing remains hidden, that she has "franqueado de par en par las puertas de mi corazón, haciéndoos patentes sus más sellados secretos" (27). Again, the eye of God sees all, including the truth of her heart, and it is her duty to bare her soul to her spiritual superior. Her letter begins with a passage on silence and returns to the theme again near the end where she justifies once more the necessity of her response to the Bishop saying, "como dice mi Padre San Jerónimo, *bonus sermo secreta non quaerit*, y San Ambrosio: *latere criminosae est conscientiae*" (93)[18]. In this way Sor Juana explains that she writes her letter because she is obligated to speak. At the end she assures her reader that nothing remains hidden and the letter itself serves to demonstrate that from the beginning she had nothing to hide.

[17] The following is Peden's translation into English of the Latin phrase above: "heard secret words, which it is not granted to men to utter" (19-21).
[18] The following is Peden's translation into English of the Latin phrase above: "As my Father Saint Jerome says, good discourse seeks not secret things, and Saint Ambrose, it is the nature of a guilty conscience to lie concealed" (92).

Sor Juana's definition of silence is but one example of a category that is still infused with substantialist logic. Defining and supplying evidence of the substantializing logic still present in Sor Juana is important because the recognition of feudalizing ideology is almost totally absent in most critical analysis of her work[19]. Shifting the focus to the more animist elements in the text implies examining several passages more commonly treated in contemporary criticism, but with an important distinction; instead of understanding the subject as a transhistorical given and therefore viewing Sor Juana as an example of oppressed or stifled subjectivity, this project insists that the expression of subjectivity in her writing was limited by the fact that subjectivity itself was still emerging as a historical reality during the period of the transition. To the degree that Sor Juana's work reproduced notions belonging to the bourgeois matix, her writing can be understood as contradicting the dominant and still feudalizing, ideology of her moment. In very specific ways Sor Juana's writing did participate in the contradictory struggle (at the level of the ideological matrix) of emergent bourgeois ideology to consolidate itself in the face of resurgent feudalizing ideological forces. In examining the textual elements that point to the continued impact of emerging bourgeois ideology, it is imperative to historicize these well in order to

[19] Ilan Stavans provides us with an interesting example of a critic who does mention feudalizing elements in Sor Juana's work but then excludes these categories within the subsequent textual analysis. In his introduction to Margaret Sayers Peden's translation of Sor Juana's work in *Poems, Protest and a Dream*, Ilan Stavans pays careful attention to the specificities of Sor Juana's historical context as evinced in statements such as the following:

> Society was organized hierarchically, based on race and birthright. […] Since the Reconquista of the Iberian Peninsula, the concept of pureza de sangre, purity of blood, had colored every aspect of life, from food and medicine to diplomacy and the arts. It justified the expulsion of Moors and Jews from Spanish territory by legitimizing the lineage of the cristianos viejos, old Christians, and opened up an acerbic debate around the notion of el honor, an individual's honor and moral standing. (xxv)

Curiously enough, this discussion of the historical moment remains merely contextual and does not impact in the least Stavans' analysis of the content of Sor Juana's writing. Nowhere in his introduction does he address how the concepts of pureza de sangre and honor come to bear upon her literary production. While perhaps worthy of further evaluation, his ultimate conclusions remain quite confusing given the omission of any consideration for the relationship between Sor Juana's writing and the earlier mentioned feudalizing ideological elements. Leaving these aside, Stavans closes his introduction with a discussion of Sor Juana's *Primero Sueño* in which, after admitting its dually scholastic and neo-Platonic extraction, he proceeds to describe the document as "an accumulative premodernist artifact […] suggesting a type of vision the Enlightenment would deliver in the eighteenth century and beyond"(xl). He goes on to state that

> In many ways, "The Dream" is a companion to Sor Juana's Response to Sor Filotea: a manifesto promoting freedom of expression and elevating literature to a higher status than all other human affairs, a modernist document transforming poetry into a new type of religion. (xli)

Stavans' earlier mention of feudalizing concepts simply fades away, and while it is true that poetry was (from the 14th century onwards) to become a new kind of religion, neither Sor Juana's work or modernism is well explained by simply defining Sor Juana as a precursor to the latter.

avoid committing the mistakes prevalent in much of contemporary criticism on Sor Juana, namely the mistake of over-inflating the proto-subject present in her texts.

During the first phase of bourgeois development, the historical appearance of the subject was accompanied at the ideological (and literary) level of the social formation by a new ideological matrix, a new *animist ideology.* The category of the subject began to emerge within this matrix in the form of the *beautiful soul* produced in the discourse of lyric poetry and legitimized in neo-Platonic philosophy. When mercantilist relations ruptured the economic base of feudalism, one result was the creation of the separation between public and private, a division which did not exist in the feudal world[20] . The public/private dichotomy and its correlating division between the *exterior* and the *interior* of the individual resulted in a new (animist) understanding of body and soul in which the body ceased to be associated with sin and decay (as under substantialism) and the beautiful soul was understood as a force that could shine through the body. Under animism the body was considered to be beautiful and especially so in its nakedness "whose flesh is transformed by the radiating force of the spirit" (Read, "Ideologies" 320). In contrast to the feudal world dominated by the eye/*I am that I am* of God, a world in which no private or interior space could exist (or remain hidden), with animism, the interior/private/personal perspective of the individual subject was developed. Unlike their substantialist counterparts, animist texts function according to a literal gaze particular to the category of the subject (and necessary for its production), and language, instead of allegorical, is plain, offering "more direct access to the pure form of the Idea"—language, as bodies, should be naked (320). While substantialism always aims at representing *spiritual Truth* (embodied in the Biblical text), animism leads to the production of *literal truth (*embodied in individual experience). As a result, the task of animist poetry is nothing less than the liberation of the soul from the body, the literal extraction of the interior and the subsequent realization of "a direct dialogue between two beautiful souls" (320). Such descriptions of animist literary production

[20] In addition to Rodríguez's and Read's extensive discussions of the history and ideological impact of the public/private dichotomy, Ellen Meiksins Wood also provides a helpful discussion of this theme in her text, *Citizens to Lords*. Here she explains that the feudal world was characterized by parcellized sovereignty, in other words, authority over the populace was distributed variously among the aristocracy. There was no unified public/civic space nor any central legislative body that individuals could appeal to other than aristocratic lords (170-1). Only with the appearance of the Absolutist State will the concepts of the public sphere and the private citizen begin to take shape.

will undoubtedly call to mind certain selections of Sor Juana's poetry including her *Primer sueño* where the separation and potential liberation of the soul from the body is described and contemplated in great detail. At the same time, *La respuesta* also represents quite literally a personal dialogue between herself and another soul, Sor Filotea, as well as an attempt to legitimize an individual life. The autobiographical qualities of Sor Juana's letter make her work another incidence of the phenomenon that Rodríguez describes in his text, *La literatura del pobre*, in that her text participates in the long and contradictory historical process of legitimizing the I/author/subject.

> el yo que se narra en los textos legitima a su vez (último proceso de legitimación) al yo enunciador (al autor, digamos) que escribe los textos. Por tanto, el yo/autor no está plenamente establecido, se despliega en el texto mismo y no como un doble del yo narrado sino como su sostén; el yo previo, aún latente, es sólo la condición de posibilidad tanto del yo textual como del yo lector. (27)

Sor Juana's letter exhibits certain key features of animism throughout, the most obvious being a pervasive perspectivism. As Read explains, "the defining characteristic" of the subject that begins to manifest itself in animist ideology "is its capacity to view reality in *literal* terms, as opposed to *reading* it, in the substantialist manner" (*Latin* 11-12). Although, as explored in the previous section of the chapter, her text does continue to incorporate substantialist interpretation, Sor Juana's letter is also undeniably characterized by the literal gaze and first-person narrative that served to legitimize the emerging subject of bourgeois relations. Her text chronicles a series of real lived experiences that are presented as such, as opposed to symbolic episodes in need of substantialist *reading*. The basic premise of the text is to provide an explanation for Sor Juana's actions and this activity is conducted simultaneously along two contradictory ideological axes —1) in a tributary/confessional mode that understands her writing as service (as explored above) and 2) as a defense of a unique and individual life, legitimized by personal first-hand experience and symptomatic of the impact of emerging bourgeois ideology. As an autobiographical self-defense, the nun's text narrates her personal history and addresses the polemic against her scholarly endeavors that has caused the exchange of letters to occur. The first-person narrative is strong from the beginning, and one

can be sure that the text is functioning at the literal level when Sor Juana states: "Yo no quiero ruido con el Santo Oficio" (*Woman* 25). Once she begins the history of her life, she narrates events in chronological order paying attention to literal details of time and place, features that are less relevant to substantialist narratives adhering to a figural notion of time. In order to explain her actions in the present, she begins by describing her childhood and a chain of literal cause and effect is established:

> Prosiguiendo en la narración de mi inclinación, de que os quiero dar entera noticia, digo que no había cumplido los tres años de mi edad cuando enviando mi madre a una hermana mía, mayor que yo, a que se enseñase a leer en una de las que llaman Amigas, me llevó a mí tras ella el cariño y la travesura. (29)

Sor Juana describes herself as a child in order to demonstrate that she has always been of the same disposition, desiring to learn. She goes on to explain how she learned to read in a very short time, surprising both her teacher and her mother, and the inclusion at the end of the passage of a reference to an eyewitness to the fact is yet another clear manifestation of the emphasis on the individual perspective(s) present in the text and their legitimizing function: "Aún vive la que me enseñó (Dios la guarde), y puede testificarlo" (29).

The famous passage in which Sor Juana describes how she decided to cut her hair in order to measure the time it would take her to learn grammar is yet another instance in which a very literal notion of time is apparent in the the text. Eyes and fingers first measure the literal length of the hair which is then cut in order that its growth become the hourglass to measure the literal speed, or the linear time, of Sor Juana's learning. In this passage the reader can witness the unfolding of a new association, particular to bourgeois relations, between the eye and the thing. As Rodríguez explains, "la relación ojo/cosa, o sea la mirada literal, es un inconsciente ideológico […] que supone una ruptura radical respeto al mundo sacralizado anterior" (*Literatura* 42). The literal eye is unmistakably at work in these lines from Sor Juana's letter:

> Empecé a deprender gramática, en que creo no llegaron a veinte las lecciones que tomé; y era tan intenso mi cuidado, que siendo así que en las mujeres—y más en tan florida juventud—es tan apreciable adorno natural del cabello, yo me cortaba de él

> cuatro o seis dedos, midiendo hasta dónde llegaba antes e imponiéndome ley de que si cuando volviese a crecer hasta allí no sabía tal o tal cosa que me había propuesto deprender en tanto que crecía, me lo había de volver a cortar en pena de la rudeza. (*Woman* 31)

Her hair grew back before she had learned the proposed material and so she was obligated to cut it off again, and it is only at this point in the anecdote that a measure of "the narrative's literal level of meaning is surrendered […] to its symbolic counterpart" (Read, *Latin* 26). Sor Juana finishes the anecdote by deciphering the symbolic meaning of her cut hair in accordance with a more substantialist *reading* of the episode:

> Sucedía así que él crecía y yo no sabía lo propuesto, porque el pelo crecía aprisa y yo aprendía despacio, y con efecto le cortaba en pena de la rudeza, que no me parecía razón que estuviese vestida de cabellos cabeza que estaba tan desnuda de noticias, que era más apetecible adorno. (*Woman* 31)

Throughout the text there are various allegorical or symbolic gestures like this one, but allegory is not the motor of the text. Although substantialist readings populate her text, the story of Sor Juana's life is related here on the whole not as a biblical gloss in the substantialist fashion, but as a literal description of her life.

Over and over again she emphasizes in her letter to the Bishop her persistent and ardent desire to learn:

> Desde que me rayó la primera luz de la razón, fue tan vehemente y poderosa la inclinación a las letras, que ni ajenas reprensiones—que he tenido muchas–, ni propias reflejas—que he hecho no pocas–, han bastado a que deje de seguir este natural impulso que Dios puso en mi. (27)

Although she interprets her aptitude and inclination for study as God-given nature, she presents these in a literal, material fashion. The impulse she speaks of is a literal experience and not an allegorical element in her text. The intensity of her lived personal experiences and her desire to study is palpable in the text. Earlier Sor Juana's text was compared to the story of *El Cid* suggesting that these texts share an important feudalizing feature, that of the restoration of the servant to his or her rightful/natural place. While Sor Juana's text does echo *El Cid* in this

way, there is at the same time a significant difference in the notion of *life* that unfolds in each text. Although Sor Juana's text does work toward the restoration of loss of good standing, one cannot help but sense the open-ended nature of the conclusion of her text. In a circular and substantialist epic like that of *El Cid*, the past, present and future are already written, whereas Sor Juana's letter is but one intervention in a dialogue that will presumably continue beyond the last page of her exposition. Even as she insists upon her will to serve, the course of her literal (still unwritten) life is at stake in this text and depends upon her ability to successfully negotiate her present predicament. In this sense, she is writing her life in a way that effectively participates in the production of proto-subjectivity. The resulting text is mottled throughout by a certain dissonance between the concept of a pre-inscribed God-given nature (corresponding to the feudal notion of a life that is already written) and an embryonic notion of the self-made person (a life that is written in the process of living). While Sor Juana insists time and again that her love of knowledge is God-given, almost as if knowledge itself were innate in her, she also displays on multiple occasions her personal drive and testifies to her self-discipline. In the following sentences, Sor Juana describes her material reality in the convent:

> Lo que sí pudiera ser descargo mío es el sumo trabajo no sólo en carecer de maestro, sino de condiscípulos con quienes conferir y ejercitar lo estudiado, teniendo sólo por maestro un libro mudo, por condiscípulo un tintero insensible; en vez de explicación y ejercicio, muchos estorbos, no sólo los de mis religiosas obligaciones (que éstas ya se sabe cuán útil y provechosamente gastan el tiempo), sino de aquellas cosas accesorias de una comunidad: como estar yo leyendo y antojárseles en la celda vecina tocar y cantar; estar yo estudiando y pelear dos criadas y venirme a constituir juez de su pendencia, estar yo escribiendo y venir una amiga a visitarme, haciéndome mala obra con muy buena voluntad, donde no es preciso no sólo admitir el embarazo, pero quedar agradecida del perjuicio. Y esto es continuamente....[21] (41-3)

[21] As we have seen in various previous examples, it is almost always possible to examine a passage from Sor Juana's work in relationship to both substantialist and animist logic. In the case of this particular passage, the literal description of daily life and Sor Juana's characterization as an individual driven to study are both features that point to the presence of the proto-subject in the text. At the same time, it is important to notice in the first lines of this passage the logic of Sor Juana's apology for her possible shortcomings as a student. When she refers to the "mute book" as her only teacher and the total absence of co-disciples, she acknowledges the lack of an

The literal materiality of daily life is undeniably manifest in Sor Juana's work, standing in stark contrast to the pervasive allegory of earlier texts from the feudal period.

1.4 Calleja's *Vida de Sor Juana*: animist biography or substantialist hagiography?

At this point it seems helpful to compare and contrast *La Respuesta* with another transitional text in order to examine the range of ideological extraction possible during this period. A text that has become a staple resource for Sor Juana scholarship is Diego Calleja's *Vida de Sor Juana* (1700). This text, written and published shortly after Sor Juana's death, is of particular interest here because of the fact that it tells the story of the nun's life with an ideological inflection very different from the one that informs *La Respuesta,* even in spite of the brief number of years separating them. Calleja's text has often been referred to as a short biography of Sor Juana's life and is typically utilized in scholarship on Sor Juana to supplement the existing body of biographical information on the nun. Peden, for example, describes the contribution of Calleja's text in the following manner:

> Almost three centuries have passed since Sor Juana's death in 1695. In spite of exhaustive research there are great lacunae in regard to her bibliography, the precise chronology of her works, the contents of her fabled library, and the intricacies of her personal relationships, that will probably never be filled in. The two principal sources for biographical information remain, after centuries, *La Respuesta* itself, and a brief biographical essay that borrows heavily from *La Respuesta* published in 1700 by Father Diego Calleja. ("Introduction" 5)

While Calleja's text very well may provide some legitimate biographical information on Sor Juana, the fundamental productive logic of his text does not correspond to that of biography. If biography (a quintessential bourgeois literary category) serves to establish the uniqueness of the individual subject in question, Calleja's text works at a basic level in what could even be described as the opposite direction as the priest fashions Sor Juana into a saint by dissolving

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appropriate hierarchy in her learning and in this way accounts for her possible faults in a manner consistent with scholastic reasoning.

(and absolving her of) her individuality and meshing her character and will with that of Christ. The fact that many critics don't seem to hesitate to classify Calleja's text as biography is again reflective of the limited ability of much of contemporary criticism to break with the category of the subject and understand its historicity. This same issue was touched upon in the introduction in a brief discussion of the fact that the classification of Sor Juana's letter as autobiography is also an assertion in need of some qualification. If this is true of *La Respuesta*, then to classify Calleja's text as biography is even more problematic. But before examining this specific problem in more detail, it is perhaps helpful to consider for a moment the preoccupation, characteristic of normative bourgeois criticism, for obtaining a complete biography of any given author.

The above quote by Peden summarizes very succinctly the preoccupation with biography as she laments the gaps in our knowledge of Sor Juan's life; the inability to reconstruct more completely the nun's life generates a sense of tragedy and mystery around Sor Juana. The entire introduction to Peden's translation of Sor Juana's letter is dedicated precisely to the task of outlining the chronology of Sor Juana's life. A biography is distilled from her letter (and Calleja's text) as part of the (re)construction of the subject, a task that is always central to bourgeois criticism. From the perspective of normative criticism, the details of the life of the individual in question are necessary in order to make sense of her actions and writing. Doubtless it will seem almost fickle to critique a critic for laboring to accomplish something as presumably innocent as the reconstruction of a personal chronology. And yet, while it would surely be counterproductive to do away with the pursuit of biographical information regarding the writers we study, we must at the same time consider the ways in which this activity is overdetermined by the logic of bourgeois ideology. It is often precisely the most seemingly objective and unbiased of procedures that are most steeped in bourgeois ideology and therefore most invisible to critique. The preoccupation for constructing a solid biography of an author is at heart an attempt to construct a bourgeois subject, complete with text, context, interior and exterior. In the case of Sor Juana, this (re)construction often results in the fabrication of a curiously modern subject suspiciously located more in the gaps and silences than in the actual sentences of her texts. In a scenario where what is imponderable for

bourgeois criticism is the absence of a subject, it is often necessary to stitch one together with the bits and pieces (or the silences) of texts that most readily lend themselves to such a reading. In the following citations from two critics of Sor Juana, one can observe the way in which Calleja's text is quickly perused for useful biographical information. These elements are plucked from the text while the rest is largely discarded in analytical gestures that clearly display normative criticism's predilection for (useful/true) biography over (useless/dubious) hagiography.

In his critical introduction to a selection of Sor Juana's work titled *Poems, Protest and a Dream*, Ilan Stavans pauses in mid-sentence to nuance the general classification of Calleja's text on Sor Juana: "Father Diego Calleja, her first biographer (or, better, hagiographer), a Jesuit and Sor Juana's contemporary […] saw her life as an act of ascendancy, an allegory of supreme spirituality" (xxii). This textual hiccup, where Stavans replaces "biography" with "hagiography" would seem to provide a potential inroad for the critic to open a discussion, for example, on the ideological contradictions characteristic of the transition, but Stavans says nothing more on the difference between biography and hagiography. While one could argue that he has no reason to dwell here on this topic, given the fact that he only mentions Calleja's text in order to establish for the reader the various sources that provide information about the date of Sor Juana's birth, the inclusion of the word "hagiographer" is significant, as is the fact that Stavans does not erase the word "biographer" from his classification. The latter reference is unsurprising in light of the fact that he too mines Calleja for biographical information, but in what is written almost as a critical afterthought, Stavans seems to suggest that Calleja is *both biographer and hagiographer* at the same time. Here Stavans is definitely scratching the surface of transition issues here with a thought arguably worth more exploration than it is given in his introductory comments. Sor Juana scholar Stephanie Merrim also mentions Calleja's text in her exhaustive study of Sor Juana, and, like Stavans, she too classifies Calleja's *Vida* as having both biographical and hagiographical tendencies. Merrim's ultimate dismissal of Calleja's text, however, is much more explicit and full-bodied than Stavans':

> Sor Juana's *Fama y obras póstumas* [Fame and Posthumous Works] (1700), the very volume that as I discuss later eulogizes her prodigious idiosyncrasies, in a baroque

> counterpoint also includes Father Diego Calleja's conventionally hagiographic biography of the nun-writer. Calleja makes short shrift of Sor Juana's life as a writer to concentrate on the period after her supposed renunciation of humanistic pursuits and "conversion." The penitent Sor Juana of his biography so mortifies her flesh that she has to be restrained. As his famous line would have it, Sor Juana was not walking but flying to salvation. (*Early* 20)

The contrast that Merrim introduces between the value and truth of biography and the uselessness and dubiousness of hagiography could hardly be more patent. Her description of Calleja's work is teeming with negative qualifiers; Sor Juana's "renunciation of humanistic pursuits" is only "supposed" and the word "conversion" is placed in scare quotes letting us know that Merrim seriously doubts the legitimacy of Calleja's depiction of Sor Juana's final years. At the same time, however, Merrim is forced to acknowledge that Calleja's "baroque counterpoint" is somehow as typical of the period as is Sor Juana's writing. Again, we find ourselves in the middle of a critical analysis that offers no explanation for the historical coexistence of such divergent texts except to say that they represent the wide spectrum of possibilities of *the baroque*. How can we better explain the historical coexistence of such very different texts that describe the same life? And why, for that matter, is Sor Juana's own description of her life so appealing to modern readers while Calleja's is not? Couldn't it be argued that all writing is "conventional" with respect to the ideology it reproduces?

What is clear is that Stavans and Merrim both evince a predilection for literality and view Sor Juana as, even within the Baroque, exponentially more modern than her Jesuit biographer/hagiographer. Merrim especially reveals her distaste for the "conventionality" of Calleja's allegorical vision. Rather than understanding Calleja and Sor Juana's textual production as two legitimately comparable repositories of transitional ideology, Sor Juana is simply presented as much more like us, a genuine subject, while Calleja is held at a distance, a figure whose potential for sincere expression has been totally eclipsed by baroque convention. Such an approach clearly belongs to bourgeois ideology and is largely blind to the historicity of the subject of bourgeois relations, preferring to understand the subject as a transhistorical phenomenon. The result in this context is a criticism that can only judge Sor Juana and Calleja

according to the category of the subject, and predictably, Sor Juana is found to be much more stomachable as a subject (even in spite of her occasional lapses into "baroque rhetoric") while Calleja's text presents a decidedly feebler individuality, the oppressed subject as it appears during the *Dark Ages* –to put it in terms derivative of the bourgeois perspective. What is particularly important to emphasize is the positive light in which Sor Juana's text is viewed and the negative tone that critics often take when referring to Calleja's text. According to many critics, Sor Juana's subjectivity, i.e., the full and sincere expression of her individuality is also oppressed at times in her text, but she is continuously portrayed as looking for ways to assert herself in spite of the Dark Age mentality that still bogs the subject down. Calleja, on the other hand, is most often depicted as having contributed to the oppressive bog.

Neither of the critics mentioned above examines how *both* of these works produce and reproduce the logic of two contradictory systems, namely the feudal and the capitalist systems; neither engages in a meaningful discussion of the ways in which both of these 17th century works function variously at the literal *and* the symbolic/allegorical level, displaying evidence of animist and substantialist tendencies alike. Although Sor Juana's writing is indeed more ideologically familiar to the bourgeois reader, the important similarities between the two texts as well as the historical reasons for the ideological gap between them are left wholly unexplored in the criticism. In a manner of speaking, Sor Juana and Calleja have both more and less in common than what criticism has thus far explained. While Stavans and Merrim do make introductory observations about the complex realities of the Baroque or Early Modern period, neither is in the end able to explain the ideological contradictions that characterize the texts of the period or historicize the subject. What is missing in these arguments is that Sor Juana and Calleja's texts are transition texts, a reality that can be observed in the ways that each of them register the impact of divergent transitional ideologies and attempt to resolve the resulting contradictions.

If it is true that the transition between feudalism and capitalism was marked by a struggle for dominance at every level between the two opposing systems, we can only expect to discover a textual production that registers this struggle and is thus predictably uneven and ideologically diverse/contradictory. Sor Juana and Calleja's texts coexisted historically in same

way that the contradictory ideologies of the transition coexist, not as a function of the unique personalities of their authors, but more symptomatically, as a manifestation of the logic(s) of the two social systems in conflict during the transition. Just as there were two fundamental modes of economic production in play during this period, there were also two basic modes of textual production. "The result is a body of literature, […] which consists, fundamentally, of at least two literatures, corresponding to the existence of two optics" (Read, *Latin* 19). Each text produced during this period necessarily represented an ideological mix that occupied a space along an ideological spectrum that stretched between the feudal and bourgeois ideological matrices. Sor Juana and Calleja's texts simply represent distinct mixes within the same realm of possibilities; the critic who begins with a knowledge of transitional ideologies is much more able to explain what it is that Sor Juana and Calleja's texts have in common as well as what separates them. As Read explains, a given text is always radically historical in that it "is necessarily true to its ideological origins;" "the task of the critic is to understand these origins, as they are grounded in real history" (25). Leaving off subject-centered focus on personal biography or genius is necessary in order to get at the ideological derivation of a text. Instead of collapsing Sor Juana and Calleja's writing into the catch-all category of "the Baroque" and then explaining their differences as inflections of the unique personality of each author, it is possible instead to explain the distance between these texts by demonstrating that Calleja's text is in fact more feudalizing while Sor Juana's *Respuesta*, although residually feudalizing in many aspects, also works toward the production of the proto-subjectivity characteristic of early bourgeois relations.

It is important to recognize why Calleja is so often referred to as Sor Juana's first biographer. In a sense the answer is quite simple; the literal gaze that we have been discussing, present in Sor Juana's text and characteristic of animism, is also present in Calleja's description of Sor Juana's life. The attention he pays to the chronological ordering of events results in a much more literal timeline than can be found in pre-transition substantialist texts, and as a result, many critics simply select elements from the timeline he establishes in order to recreate Sor Juana's life. This is an understandable practice to a certain degree, but one that should be informed by a knowledge of the precise kind of text Calleja produces. While Sor Juana's letter

and Calleja's *Vida de Sor Juana* both chronicle a series of real lived experiences (much of Calleja's chronology can be corroborated in Sor Juana's own writing), in the end the Jesuit's text does submit to the allegorical norm characteristic of the feudal understanding of the world; as the text unfolds the biographical (literal) elements are eventually subsumed by another kind of textual logic as Calleja abandons his literal description of Sor Juana's life and person and moves into a substantialist reading of these. While both texts in question are representative of the hybrid and contradictory nature of transition texts, each represents a distinct sort of transitional discourse. In Sor Juana's letter, feudalizing ideology plays a significant role as the nun stops to *read* certain signs along the way in a world that is still sacralized, but the text as a whole does not consistently obey the allegorical norm of substantialism. The world could now be read in both literal and allegorical terms, a contradictory state of affairs that as observed earlier, does cause Sor Juana some trouble as she tries to explain certain of her positions. Calleja's text, on the other hand, while exhibiting certain features that reveal the impact that animism has had on the feudal ideological matrix, is ultimately overdetermined by a substantialist logic. The priest's text understands earthly life and worldly experiences not in literal terms, but as a passage into true/eternal life. As Read explains, for such works, "To search in the past is not to seek the causes that account for current events, but only to "certify" the existence of an eternal truth, which continues to play itself out, today as in the past" (42). Accordingly, Calleja's text reveals its intent to read the divine signatures in Sor Juana's life from the start: "Nació en un aposento que dentro de la misma Alquería llaman La Celda, casualidad que, con el primer aliento, la enamoró de la vida monástica, y la enseñó a que eso era vivir, respirar aires de clausura" (13).

Sor Juana's letter and Calleja's *Vida* elaborate common themes as both texts portray Sor Juana as a servant of her Lord and both describe her as an exceptional individual. Sor Juana was well aware of her categorization as "rara avis", and Calleja too begins his narrative by signaling the nun's distinctiveness describing her as "rara mujer," "prodigiosa," and "esta maravilla" (13). Again, the ideological contradiction at the heart of Sor Juana's text is visible in the unwieldy amalgamation of a proto-subject (demonstrating a certain degree of self-determination) and a servant (demonstrating a will to submission). The result, as we have seen,

is a text that attempts to marry Sor Juana's exceptional nature with service. While her text does compare her life to that of Christ and insist in many ways upon her obedience and unfaltering will to serve, *La Respuesta* remains a text that emphasizes and adheres to the literalness of personal lived experiences far more than Calleja's.

Both Sor Juana and Calleja's texts compare the nun to Christ, but they do so in very distinct ways. Many of Sor Juana's critics have perceived a high level of rebelliousness or subversiveness in the pages where Sor Juana parallels her own life to that of Christ and concludes that the world tends to persecute those who seek wisdom, a reality revealed in the sign represented by Christ's crown of thorns (*Woman* 55). There is without a doubt a high degree of audacity in Sor Juana's implication that she has suffered, in large part and greatly, because of her singularity: "Pero todo ha sido acercarme más al fuego de la persecución, al crisol del tormento, y ha sido con tal extremo que han llegado a solicitar que se me prohíba el estudio"(59). What's more, although (as she states time and again) she is a sinner, she is also, like Christ, unjustly accused of wrongdoing; the writing that has distinguished her, has been done only in fulfillment of her God-given nature:

> Una vez, lo consiguieron con una prelada muy santa y muy cándida que creyó que el estudio era cosa de la Inquisición y me mandó que no estudiase. Yo la obedecí (unos tres meses que duró el poder ella mandar) en cuanto a no tomar libro, que en cuanto a no estudiar absolutamente, como no cae debajo de mi potestad, no lo pude hacer, porque aunque no estudiaba en los libros, estudiaba en todas las cosas que Dios crió, sirviéndome ellas de letras, y de libro toda esta máquina universal. Nada veía sin refleja; nada oía sin consideración. (59)

It is important to recognize Sor Juana's boldness in this passage but without distorting it by interpreting her as expressing utter disdain for the religious world and the social hierarchy that she was a part of. Instead, as we shall examine in more detail in Chapter Four, Sor Juana is consistently adamant about the fact that women of her class and station, just like men, should be recognized in their capacity as faithful servants. It is true that she is bold in her self-defense, but it is a self-defense designed to restore status that has been lost (to herself and women of privilege and errudition in general), and not one aimed at mocking the religious establishment.

Sor Juana reads her persecution as a sign that she is in fact fulfilling her duty to serve. Throughout her letter, she links her exceptionality and her drive to study and compose to obedience. Sor Juana is careful to state that she does not mean to imply that she is like Christ or that she is truly wise: "En todo lo dicho, venerable Señora, no quiero (ni tal desatino cupiera en mí) decir que me han perseguido por saber, sino sólo porque he tenido amor a la sabiduría y las letras, no porque haya conseguido ni uno ni otro" (57). Although she maintains that she has not attained wisdom, it is significant that she equates "love of wisdom and letters" and the pursuit of these with the figure of Christ. In the quote above, even her disobedience to the Abbess is portrayed as obedience to her nature, obedience to her love of wisdom and letters.

Calleja's *Vida de Sor Juana* also defends the claim that Sor Juana's will to study was part of her nature, but with qualifications not present in Sor Juana's *Respuesta*: "[L]a objeción de que se atreva una mujer a presumir de formal escolástica, es tan irracional, como si riñera con alguna mina de hierro porque fuera de su naturaleza se había entremetido a producir oro" (21). Calleja's praise of Sor Juana's love of letters privileges scholastic study over the study of "las ciencias mayores" (20) and certainly over the practice of poetry, an activity that she would eventually have to give up entirely in favor of "el camino de una muy alta perfección" (37). As Calleja's text moves from a chronology of Sor Juana's early life into a description of her journey to a more perfected nature he states that she was determined to "dejar en su mundo su inclinación a la sabiduría humana, y en cada libro que abandonaba degollarle a Dios un Issac, fineza que su majestad la pagó con sobre añadir a su entendimiento capacidad para aprender en la religión" (18). Calleja compares Sor Juana to Abraham as a servant so loyal to her Lord that she is willing to sacrifice even her own child (in this case, her writing and pursuit of human knowledge) if required.

In Calleja's version of Sor Juana's life, her study of "las ciencias" and her poetic practices are simply the precursor to developing truer and more perfect spiritual practices[22]. The nun's

[22] It is important to note here that Calleja's text was written and published in 1700, after Sor Juana's death and after she had effectively given up her library and her writing. *La Respuesta*, on the other hand, was written in 1691 before she had reinstated Nuñez de Miranda as her confessor and began subscribing again to his stringent spiritual guidance. With these facts in mind, it is entirely possible that Sor Juana herself did, near the end of her life, willingly return to a more substantialist/allegorical interpretation of life and service, not unlike the interpretation that appears in the pages of texts like that of Calleja. Her actions seem to corroborate such a shift, but critics

intense interest in learning is ultimately portrayed as an obstacle, a temptation that she was meant to overcome on her path to becoming a better servant. Only when worldly pursuits, including her writing, had been sacrificed, did Sor Juana become truly Christ-like. As part of her battle to become like her Savior, Sor Juana had to "declararse la guerra y conquistarse del todo a sí misma", a process that began with a general confession lasting a number of days (24). Toward the same end, she was obligated to "deshacerse de sus amados libros, como el que en amaneciendo el día claro apaga la luz artificial por inútil" (24). The substantial opposition between light and darkness is clear; the books of man are mere shadow when compared to the illumination of God[23]. In *La Respuesta*, Sor Juana's describes a period of her life during which she was deprived of her books comparing it to torment, while in Calleja's version, the nun is freed from her books, begins to meditate upon God alone, and experiences true illumination. In Calleja's text, obedience is achieved only when selfish interests and personal pride are surrendered along with one's name and will to personal fame; the servant must be an imitator of Christ and is only Christ-like when distinctiveness is forfeited, when her personal identity is diluted to the point that the final purified soul resembles any other saint in any other hagiographical *vida*. At this point, individuality is totally eclipsed by oneness with Christ. In contrast to the individuating proto-subject produced in Sor Juana's letter, Calleja's account of Sor Juana's life works toward the legitimization of a different kind of *life*, one of a much more substantialist extraction. Decidedly more hagiography than biography, *Vida de Sor Juana* depicts an individual who undergoes a process of purification, a stripping away of all worldly attachments until all that is left is a reflection of Christ.

At the end of the process Sor Juana has effectively taken on the mantle of her Savior, and Calleja, in substantialist fashion, describes her as "armada de esta desnudez" (25). Rodríguez explains the specific significance of nudity for substantialism very well: "Such then is the realm of appearances, substantial appearances: […] Even the exclusive 'nudity' of Christ is a social vestiture: the substantial sign of his misery, of his poverty, of his lowliness. […] From all of

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debate about the degree to which Sor Juana was able to determine the course of her final years. We will perhaps never know the precise scenario that led Sor Juana to dismantle her library, but what seems very clear is that the struggles of the transition that played themselves out in her writing also defined the events in her life.

[23] The nervousness of the Church hierarchy with respect to the growing proliferation of books being published not under the control of the Church is also apparent throughout the text.

which we conclude that 'nudity' is the dress of Christ (*Theory* 120). For Calleja, only when Sor Juana is reduced to the naked and impoverished version of herself (a reflection of Christ), has she become exemplary. The priest's text continues to legitimize the notion of the feudal serf as well as the practice of reading the signatures of God inscribed in all of nature. For substantialism, obedience to one's Lord is necessary and the ultimate goal of the sinner is to put on the nakedness of Christ. Unlike the strong "I" developed in Sor Juana's letter, Calleja dissolves the "I" into a saintly imitation of Christ; individuality is absorbed into the notion of *ejemplo*. A pre-transition substantialist text would not have had to contend with the strong "I" at the center of Sor Juana's life/text, but given the historical conjuncture, Calleja's text was ultimately involved in the unraveling of a *subject* in order to replace it with a *servant*.

Another clear distinction to be made between these texts is that while in *La Respuesta* perspectivism does not cede its place to substantialist reading, in Calleja's *Vida* the chronological account of Sor Juana's life is ultimately eclipsed in the text by a more eschatological notion of time that further legitimates a view of the world that depicts the pursuit of knowledge as futile, and study as unnecessary for salvation. Calleja's text explains that Sor Juana's final confessor, Núñez de Miranda, viewed her studies as an exercise that could become a vice that robbed from the time she should be spending in prayer (36). Only after giving up such practices was it possible to achieve true communion with God and learn not to fear death: "En esta ferviente intimidad con Dios, tan deseable para esperar la muerte quien no la teme como fin de la vida, sino como principio de la eternidad, pasó la madre Juana sus dos últimos años, y llegó al fin el de noventa y cinco, muy fértil para el cielo" (26). The focus on earthly endeavor is replaced by an emphasis on heaven in "a figural chronology that images this earthly time as a pilgrimage, and death as liberation" (Read, *Latin* 42); as her confessor had explained to her, "el mejor modo de despreciar el mundo era no pisarle" (Calleja 25). The saintly Sor Juana detached from all worldly activity that appears in the final pages of Calleja's text stands in stark contrast with the Sor Juana of *La Respuesta* who narrates very literally and with great detail her interactions with the material world, from measuring her hair to tracing the path of the spinning top, to her famous discussion of her experiences learning in the kitchen. *La Respuesta* is a text that breaks with the allegorical reading of the sacralized world

and exhibits a literalism only possible after the perspective of the individual subject of bourgeois relations had begun to inhabit textual production.

While Calleja's text depicts a gradual progression from an image of Sor Juana as a gifted and learned woman to an image of a submissive servant willing to sacrifice everything in order to become more like Christ, Sor Juana's letter works throughout to dissolve the contradictions between poet and servant while still salvaging both identities. At the same time, as her argument develops, the submission to hierarchy sometimes begins to loosen, and especially so in the section where she defends herself against those who would criticize her for having written a treatise (*Carta Atenagórica*) challenging the theology of a sermon by a Portuguese Jesuit, Antonio de Vieyra.

> Si el crimen está en la Carta Atenagórica, ¿fue aquélla más que referir sencillamente mi sentir con todas las venias que debo a nuestra Santa Madre Iglesia? Pues si ella, con su santísima autoridad, no me lo prohíbe, ¿Por qué me lo han de prohibir otros? ¿Llevar una opinión contraria de Vieyra fue en mí atrevimiento, y no lo fue en su Paternidad llevarla contra los tres Santos Padres de la Iglesia? Mi entendimiento tal cual ¿no es tan libre como el suyo, pues viene de un solar? ¿Es alguno de los principios de la Santa Fe, revelados, su opinión, para que la hayamos de creer a ojos cerrados? (*Woman* 85)

Although Sor Juana does not challenge the authority of the Church to determine the permissibility of a given text, the above passage undeniably registers another kind of authority as well, the authority of the proto-subject manifest and legitimized in individual experience. Only with the advent of a new set of social relations has the notion of a "simple expression of my feeling" appeared on the horizon as a meaningful nucleus around which to organize a text. The authority and legitimizing force of the "I" is palpable in this portion of the text even as the text itself participates in the historical constitution of subjectivity. In spite of the multiple references to the permission granted by the church, this passage represents a definite shift away from an earlier textual production realized without an author and based in the authority of God, to a textual production legitimized by (and which also legitimizes) the subject/author/personal experience/opinion at the center of the text. In the last passage selected above, Sor Juana appeals less to eternal truth than she does to the legitimacy and

relevance of personal opinion in order to defend having written the *Carta Atenagórica*, a text that weighs in on the topic of Christ's greatest deed.

The following quote condenses the contradictory reality of the transition particularly well in that Sor Juana can be observed responding to two distinct (and contradictory) kinds of authority, the first being the authority of the Church according to the scholastic/ feudal hierarchy and the second being a new kind of authority, that belonging to the general populace, in essence, that of public opinion. After having passed the (feudalizing) censor, Sor Juana looks to her readers/audience (individual subjects) to approve or disapprove of her writing and invites them to react as they will:

> Si es, como dice el censor, herética, ¿por qué no la delata?, y con eso él quedará vengado y yo contenta, que aprecio, como debo, más el nombre de católica y de obediente hija de mi Santa Madre Iglesia, que todos los aplausos de docta. Se está bárbara—que en eso dicen bien—, ríase, aunque sea con la risa que dicen del conejo, que yo no le digo que me aplauda, pues como yo fui libre para disentir de Vieyra, lo será cualquier para disentir mi dictamen. (85)

The impact of early bourgeois ideology is clear. The public/private split has been instated and one is thus entitled (within certain limits during this historical conjuncture) to have a personal opinion about a published work. Although resurgent feudalizing forces have regained hegemony for the time being, along with the power to deem books heretical, the fact that Sor Juana also recognizes the legitimizing role of the audience demonstrates the degree to which the feudal edifice has been fractured[24]. Even Calleja's more feudalizing text registers the

[24] There are many terms in the above quotes from Sor Juana's *Respuesta* that can easily lead one to misread the nun's text according to a more modern understanding of these ideas. The fact that Sor Juana defends "libertad" and her entitlement to her own "opinión" are two examples of such potentially confusing terms. The term libertad should not be understood here according to its modern bourgeois definition as the personal freedom due to an individual simply because of his or her status as an individual equal to all other individuals. Sor Juana was far from able to think in such terms given the historical moment in which she lived. Although her text does in fact work to a certain degree toward the legitimization of liberty in the bourgeois sense, this occurs because Sor Juana's ideological production is infused to a limited extent with notions that belong to early bourgeois ideology. Her text does not defend these terms because she was a visionary able to imagine new kinds of freedom never before considered. Put another way, it is possible to imagine that if Sor Juana were obligated to define the word *libertad*, her definition of the term might have ended up very contradictory to her actual use of the term in the same way that her definition of silence grated (ideologically) against her practice and experience of silence during the transition. In all likelihood, if she had been pressed to give a definition of *libertad*, Sor Juana would have approached this task beginning with the only notion of freedom ideologically compatible with feudalism, that of

presence of the audience, referred to as "las dos Españas," (32). Certain that the content of the *Vida* is approved by the Church, Calleja's second obligation is to cater to the needs/preferences of his readers: "Usando, pues, desta confianza, refiero su vida con lisa sencillez, lejos de que el gasto de las palabras me suponga desconfiado en la inteligencia del lector" (32). The mention of the audience in Calleja's text is minimal, but it is there. In *La Respuesta* Sor Juana's awareness of the reader is ever-present in her preoccupation with the issues of publication and the idea that authorship is a form of vanity. In other words, she knows that she is being read in both Spain and New Spain and that her superiors also know this and that some of them view publication as arrogance. Within the context of *La Respuesta*, however, she does not surrender her will to study and write. The difference between Calleja and Sor Juana's discussion of the issues of writing, authorship and poetry is also indicative of the ideological distance between the two texts.

As can be expected, for Calleja, Sor Juana's fame as a gifted poet is perceived as a potential impediment to her attaining saintly exemplariness. Calleja, like other of Sor Juana's ecclesiastical superiors, understands her practice of poetry as vanity and accordingly, this practice, along with her will to study, had to be sacrificed as a sign of her relinquishing of all worldly adornment. Calleja depicts the nun as having finally triumphed against this temptation: "se esforzaba más a bañarle de su agrado antiguo y dulcísima labia, porque no fuese que la estimación de virtuosa la empeorase con vanidad del estado de tibia" (25).

Sor Juana's letter to the Bishop also recognizes the potential connection between writing and sin. As we have already seen, Sor Juana is adamant throughout her letter about her will to serve and her text registers the substantialist logic that understands the world and everything in it as ultimately belonging to God. Not unlike Calleja, she is prepared to recognize that writing can be tied to ambition and that this is a dangerous thing:

> ¡Oh, si todos–y yo la primera, que soy una ignorante–nos tomásemos la medida al talento antes de estudiar y, lo peor es, de escribir con ambiciosa codicia de igualar y aun

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libre albedrío (free will), otherwise, the freedom to chose to serve the Lord or not.

de exceder a otros, que poco ánimo nos quedara y de cuántos errores nos excusáramos y cuántas torcidas inteligencias que andan por ahí no anduvieran! (*Woman* 73)[25]

Her submission of her writing to her superior for correction is indicative of a life still hemmed in by feudal hierarchy; her writing flows in tributary fashion in this passage to the Bishop who represents God's authority, and Sor Juana submits her text to him so that he may correct her, not according to his own personal opinion of the text, but rather by examining her text in order to establish its fidelity to the Biblical text. Here Sor Juana asks the Bishop to fulfill the scholastic charge to insure that all books remain circumscribed to the Book of God. In this passage, Sor Juana expresses her desire to be corrected and have her writing cleansed if need be: "Pero bien que va a vuestra corrección; borradlo, rompedlo y reprendedme, que eso apreciaré y más que todo cuanto vano aplauso me pueden otros dar: *Corripiet me iustus in misericordia, et increpabit: oleum autem pecatoris non impinguet caput meum*" (73)[26].

In the above passages, Sor Juana's text echoes Calleja's understanding of writing as a practice bound to the notion of service, but her treatment of the issue turns out to be somewhat more complex. While Sor Juana does defend her writing as a form of service to her superiors, she is at the same time unwilling to accept the assertion by certain of her superiors that poetry is, by and large, a sinful thing. On this issue she is clearly at odds with many in the Church, including Calleja's point of view:

> Pues si vuelvo los ojos a la tan perseguida habilidad de hacer versos—que en mi es tan natural, que aun me violento para que esta carta no lo sean, y pudiera decir aquello de

[25] It is interesting to note that at times Peden's translation of *La Respuesta* does also modernize Sor Juana's work, albeit unintentionally. The following is Peden's translation of the passage cited in Spanish above:

> Oh, that each of us—I, being ignorant, the first—should take the measure of our talents before we study, or, more importantly, write, with the covetous ambition to equal and even surpass other, how little spirit we should have for it, and how many errors we should avoid, and how many tortured intellects of which we have experience we should have had no experience! (72)

The use of the word "tortured" here seems to be a poor translation. "Torcidas inteligencias" is a phrase that indicates the degenerated state (as opposed to tortured) of the intellect in a way that coincides with the substantialist understanding of the world. The intellect Sor Juana describes here is the kind that one would expect to find in a fallen world, marred by sin, imperfection and bad judgment on the part of man.

[26] The following is Peden's translation into English of the Latin phrase above: "That just men shall correct me in mercy, and shall reprove me; but let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head" (72).

Quidquid conabar dicere, versus erat—, viéndola condenar a tantos tanto acriminar, he buscado muy de propósito cuál sea el daño que puedan tener, y no le he hallado; (87)[27]

Sor Juana found herself in a difficult situation because she was involved in the production of contradictory forms of writing and, in a sense, failed to see the contradiction. To state it another way, in spite of her expressed will to offer her writing as service, Sor Juana was at the same time engaging in poetic practices that were antithetical to the feudal (or Church sanctioned) understanding of writing. It is worth noting here that many critics interested in the issues of patriarchy and women's history tend to emphasize the condemnation of women's writing during the period of the transition in a way that misrepresents the historical logic of the condemnation they describe. Although the Church did clamp down very severely on women during this historical moment, a topic that will be discussed further in Chapter Four, it must be recognized that the feudal edifice was nervous about and anxious to stifle certain kinds of writing that had appeared during the transition, regardless of the gender of their authors. Condemning the practice of writing for women specifically, during this period was but one manifestation of a much larger condemnation of certain forms of writing. Sor Juana, like her superiors in the Church, was perfectly able to produce poetry as part of liturgical practice and comprehend writing as an activity that could be realized without an author (or an emphasis on authorship). Her letter verifies this assertion. By the time Sor Juana began writing, however, the figure of the author had already appeared on the horizon of history, and her own poetic production, in both its liturgical and lyrical aspects, was impacted by this reality. Her relationship to the written text and the relationship between writing and life in general were being produced by two sets of ideology. Again, we are examining a situation where the individual became the locus of an intersection of two contradictory historical ideologies; in the case of Sor Juana, the contradictory binary that defines *La Respuesta,* as well as many other of her texts, is that of *servant/author*. The Church, in the end and as exemplified in Calleja's *Vida*, was willing to accept Sor Juana as servant, but not as author. Under feudalism, the only author/authority was God.

[27] The following is Peden's translation into English of the Latin phrase above: "All I wished to express took the form of verse" (86).

As we have already seen, Sor Juana's *Respuesta* moves simultaneously in ideologically contradictory directions as the literal and allegorical levels compete and as the categories of servant and proto-subject effectively cohabit the same text. Calleja's text is not devoid of similar symptoms of the transition. Both Calleja and Sor Juana defined writing and poetry in substantialist terms and both admitted the possibility that writing could be a dangerous and inappropriate activity, but while Calleja universally condemned the animist practice of poetry as sinful vanity, Sor Juana attempted to justify such practices by reinserting them into the logic of service. At the same time and equally contradictory, just as Sor Juana's often obscure poetic production contrasted starkly with earlier animist production that preferred plain speech over the allegorical feudal norm, Calleja's more feudalizing text defends language characterized by "lisa sencillez" in his overarching rejection of the new practice of poetry (32). Calleja was pleased to have related the story of Sor Juana's life in direct and simple terms: "refiero su vida con lisa sencillez, lejos de que el gasto de las palabras me suponga desconfiado en la inteligencia del lector" (32). The contradictions at work here are worth closer scrutiny. While Sor Juana was much more invested in the new poetic practices than her contemporary, she also exhibited a greater tendency toward the kind of linguistic obscurity more characteristic of feudal textual production. Conversely, while Calleja's text defends throughout a scholastic reading of the signs, the language he employs represents a departure from substantialism as he defends the plain speech produced in and advocated by animist ideology. Once again, the issue of nudity is at work in Calleja's text, but this time with a greater level of contradiction.

As we have seen above, for substantialism nakedness can be positively associated with the essential poverty of Christ. At the same time, however, substantialism will more commonly interpret nakedness in negative terms, associating it with worldliness, with sin and the corrupt nature of the flesh[28]. In the feudal world, holy nudity is reserved for Christ given the fallen state of things, and as a result, man is obligated to the constant task of saving appearances or reading the signs inscribed in nature. In such a world, there is no direct relationship between

[28] Again, Rodríguez explains that nudity is for organicism (substantialism) simultaneously "the "dress" of Christ" and "a "sexual" adornment (the sign of immodesty and of sin); that "nudity" is, for Organicism, the very dress of the "flesh" and, in all its arrogant presence, an "enemy" of the soul" (*Theory* 120).

the eye and the thing, and language must constantly be deciphered according to the allegorical norm. As Rodríguez explains, in accordance with

> the special conception of the relation between spirit and appearances that determines organicism to its core […] the spirit only reveals itself—in this terrestrial world—through appearances, becoming incarnate in them; appearances are, then, something that one must 'admit/reject.' (*Theory* 120)

Although Calleja's text does reference Christ's exemplary nudity, as we saw above, according to the logic of substantialism, the role that nudity takes in the text in general seems to extend beyond the limits subscribed by substantialism and nudity itself is here understood more positively than would have been possible in a strictly feudal text. At the level of the global textual message, Calleja can still be seen to be reading the signs as they appear in Sor Juana's life, but at the level of language, at the level of the sentence, he prefers plainer speech, a reality visible not only in the quality of the language Calleja uses throughout the text, but also in his direct admission of this preference, as noted earlier. In addition, Calleja's insistence upon Sor Juana's need to cease her practice of poetry and "bañar[se] de su agrado antiguo y dulcísima labia" in order to emulate Christ's poverty and avoid the sin of vanity, demonstrate further his inclination toward plain language (25). In a sense, Calleja's *Vida de Sor Juana* can be regarded as participating, albeit in a rather indirect manner, in the transitional debate on language that arose as substantialist versus animist understandings of language came into contact with one another, a debate typified in texts such as Baltasar Gracián's *Agudeza y arte de ingenio*[29] and *Diálogo de la lengua* by Juan de Valdés. In both of these texts, the proper

[29] For more discussion of the transitional debate on language, refer to Read's translation of Rodríguez's text, *Theory and History of Ideological Production*, 119-124. In this section, Rodríguez quotes a portion of Gracián's Agudeza that speaks of the need to clothe the truth:

> There is nothing more insipid than a bare truth…. It was for this reason that the doctors of the soul, in their wisdom, invented the art of gilding truths, of sugar-coating disillusion […] Truth opened its eyes and thenceforth undertook to attire itself with artifice, to use inventions, to introduce itself in a round-about manner, to conquer with strategy, to paint in the distance what is close. (qtd. in *Theory* 120)

While Gracián's text clearly works in an organicist direction with respect to language, his predecessor, Juan de Valdés, advocates a more animist conception of language: "El estilo que tengo es natural, y sin afectación ninguna escrivo como hablo; solamente tengo cuidado de usar de vocablos que sinifiquen bien lo que quiero decir, y dígolo quanto más llanamente me es posible, porque a mi parecer en ninguna lengua stá bien la afectación" (Valdés, 154). Both Calleja and Sor Juana wrote during a period that saw radically different notions of language intersect and collide.

clothing of the idea is examined. Sor Juana's own *Respuesta* registers the impact that such debates had upon the issue of poetry, a practice that was scrutinized from a variety of optics. When the nun herself undertook to examine the accusations made against poetry, a practice she observed to be oft condemned, she concluded that she could find no fault in this activity (*Women* 87). And not unlike Góngora, Sor Juana demonstrated her poetic capability in complicated texts that obscured meaning in a manner that obligated her reader to interpret references and unravel enigmas. That Sor Juana's poetry should have taken this form is not surprising given the fact that she lived in the scholastic context of the convent during a historical moment characterized by resurgent feudalism; the poetic obscurity of her texts echoes Gracián's residually feudal call for truth to be properly gilded. In this same radically historical conjuncture, however, the also scholastically educated Calleja ended up curiously aligned with the more animist affinity for plain speech, but contradictorily so in that his defense of plain speech was made according to substantialist logic, i.e., the notion that too much adornment is vanity, the opposite of Christ's poverty. In this sense, the *nakedness* of speech that Calleja advocates should not be confused with the notion of naked language that develops under animism. Again, the key is to grasp the fact that distinct ideologies (substantialism and animism) will produce very distinct understandings of certain categories; nudity is not the same *thing* for these two ideologies. Although Calleja's notion of language has clearly been impacted by animism, he reinterprets the new conception of simple speech according to the logic of a scholastic substantialism producing a depiction of Sor Juana as "armada de esta desnundez" (25). His reference to nakedness has echoes of animism, but is not truly animist. What is essentially an animist form of nudity—unadorned language—functions in Calleja's text as *the very substance* of his rejection of the vanity represented in baroque poetic practices. If Gracián's "horror of the vacuum" and defense of adorned language should be understood, according to Rodríguez, as a substantialist reaction to animism's insistence upon the beauty of the flesh and the naked idea (*Theory* 119-20), then Calleja's specific defense of nudity must be understood as yet another transitional elaboration of the category of nudity as one that values nudity positively (not unlike animism), but according to a substantialist logic.

It is not unlikely that Calleja's predilection for and employment of plain speech have played a part in his classification by so many critics as Sor Juana's first biographer. At the same time, however, the fact that Calleja's text is more hagiographical than biographical is precisely what makes his narrative less interesting for critics such as Merrim and Stavans and perhaps for other critics as well. The value in Calleja's text, from the perspective of much of contemporary criticism, is limited to the biographical information that can be harvested from it; the rest is simply traditional and antiquated, far removed from the nun's visionary perspective, never mind the fact that they were contemporaries. Stavans, for example, is much more interested in the nun whose "subtlety of subversion" (xxi) "syncretistic view" (xxviii), and "increasing skepticism" (xxxix) resulted in texts that come "close to suggesting a type of vision the Enlightenment would deliver in the eighteenth century and beyond" (xl). His preference for Sor Juana over Calleja is yet another example of bourgeois criticism's fascination for the subject and its general blindness to the history of this and other historical categories. As Read notes, such important historical categories as substantialism and animism, "largely escape the comprehension of recent colonial theory, which may be described as subject-centered" (*Latin* 11). Given the fact that much of normative literary criticism has yet to theorize the transition, the value of exploring the contradictions in contemporaries like Sor Juana and Calleja goes largely unnoticed. Although both Stavans and Merrim bring Calleja's text into their discussions of Sor Juana, neither is able to effectively compare and contrast the perspectivism that dominates in *La Respuesta* with the literal life that is quickly subsumed by allegory as it unfolds in *Vida de Sor Juana*. No qualifications regarding the exact degree to which Calleja's text should be utilized to reconstruct the literal chronology of Sor Juana's life are given in spite of the fact that the Jesuit's aim was to point to divine truth rather than a literal one. Instead of explaining the contrast between Sor Juana's *Respuesta* and Calleja's *Vida* according to the historical rupture that determined them, the comparison between these texts often occurs more at the gut level of reader response. Sor Juana strikes us as an individual whose sentiments resonate with our own while Calleja recommends our erasure as individuals. In short, Sor Juana feeds subjectivity, and Calleja does not.

1.5 Sor Juana on poetry: animist practice, substantialist theory

Both Sor Juana's and Calleja's texts register the debate about language that marked the moment, and specifically about the function and value of poetry. Historically speaking, poetry generated in a feudalizing ideological matrix reproduced the logic of the feudal hierarchy and its corresponding notions of the functions of language in a fallen world; the Church valued poetic language as the language of the biblical text and of church liturgy; poetic/allegorical language was the proper garb for, even the very substance of the Truth. For feudal ideology, poetic language was associated with Divine Truth and not with the truth of individual experience or the truth of the author. Although she partakes in poetic practices incongruous with the definition of feudal poetry, Sor Juana's *Respuesta* appeals to the notion of poetic language as rooted in the sacred texts when she builds her defense of poetry:

> Antes sí los veo aplaudidos en las bocas de las Sibilas; santificados en las plumas de los Profetas, especialmente el Rey David, […]Los más de los libros sagrados están en metro, […] Y así dice Casiodoro: *omnis poetica locutio a Divinis scripturis sumsit exordium.* Pues nuestra Iglesia católica no sólo no los desdeña, mas los usa en sus Himnos y recita los de San Ambrosio, Santo Tomás, de San Isidoro y otros. (*Woman* 87-9)[30]

Here Sor Juana seems to be reminding the Church of the sacred nature of poetry. The claim that the Church does not disdain poetry, however, is made here precisely because the Church did in fact disdain verse in the 17th century, or rather a particular kind of or utilization of verse. Sor Juana, like others who wrote during her period, found herself at odds with the ecclesiastical establishment in part because she partook in poetic practices dissonant with the feudal role of poetry.

Of particular interest in this discussion of ideological contradictions is the fact that Sor Juana's definition and defense of poetry didn't exactly match her own practice of poetic expression. In the above quote, she refers only to the feudal/liturgical understanding of poetry and does not define poetry as the intimate expression of the beautiful soul in accordance with animist ideology. Although Sor Juana did create many examples of lyric poetry that produced,

[30] The following is Peden's translation into English of the Latin phrase above: "All poetic expression has as its source the Holy Scriptures" (86).

at least in part, the animist understanding of the individual, she was not able to define poetry, at the conscious level, according to such ideology. In the same way that *La Respuesta* is a hybrid text comprised of distinct ideological matrices, the same is true of her poetry in general, and oftentimes the contradictions involved can be witnessed at the level of the individual poem. Sor Juana produced both liturgical and lyrical pieces that legitimized both the feudal notion of life as service and the production of the proto-subject of bourgeois relations. As we saw above, the contradiction between the servant and the strong "I" at the center of the text is characteristic of Sor Juana's ideological production in general. Her nervousness about authorship (also mentioned earlier in this discussion) signals her awareness at the visceral level of the fact that writing as service was somehow compromised when the author's name was attached, the sin of pride likely operating. This contradiction was not to be resolved within the context of her work, however.

By the end of the feudal period, the nobility had already begun to recognize poetic practices as the expression of the elevated virtue particular to their class, but *publication* of this virtue was unnecessary to the feudal noble who did not need to prove his worth in such a manner. Early bourgeois ideology, on the other hand, understood poetry in a very distinct way, as an expression of the truth of individual experience, an expression of the soul, an expression of individual merit to be recognized through publication. This is one of the central arguments of Rodríguez's *Theory and History*—that the category of the subject was born during the transition from feudalism to capitalism, a reality that can be observed in the texts of the period and especially in the production of lyric poetry. The world in which Sor Juana wrote was a world in which poetry as the expression of Divine Truth, (i.e., poetry as liturgy) both intersected and collided with poetry defined as the expression of the truth of the individual. The rejection, on the part of the Church, of poetry as it was conceived in early bourgeois ideology was coupled with an attempt to eradicate, and when eradication was impossible, at the very least commandeer the new forms. Rodríguez theorizes that as resurgent feudalizing forces regained control, animist poetic forms that had appeared with the advent of the subject were in effect usurped by the feudalizing hegemony and redeployed with a more substantialist content (121). At the same time, animism did continue to have a visible impact. Sor Juana's own poetry

provides us with evidence of this phenomenon; certain of her sonnets, for example, exemplify quite plainly the contradictory logic of the period in question. Here we will examine two sonnets that treat the theme of *Carpe Diem* variously, according to both substantialist *and* animist norms.

Rodríguez's work explores the transformation of the Carpe Diem theme during the passage from substantialism (organicism) to animism in great detail explaining that for feudalizing ideology, the Carpe Diem theme pointed to the importance of preparing one's soul for death and judgment:

> Hence the very precise meaning of organicist Carpe Diem (from the *Ubi Sunt* to the *Dances of Death*, from the images of clocks, ashes, etc. in 17th-century poems to the Autos of Calderón) in the precise sense of being a reminder of man's dependence upon the Lord, and of the double value of appearances ("*exile/return*") and the sometimes wretched brevity of the terrestrial passage. In this version the Carpe Diem does not delight in the present moment, rather it pictures evanescence as the harbinger of death, thus revealing the presence of the divine spirit in the flesh, and warns against the gloss of carnality as an end in itself. The aim is to conjure up the prospect of entry into the true life: the moment of Judgment and of the encounter with God, when deceit will be impossible and everything will stand revealed. (*Theory* 168)

True to Rodríguez's description, the following sonnet written by Sor Juana warns of "the gloss of carnality" and "the double value of appearances" while at the same time underscoring the reality of impending death and judgment. Excepting the fact that it is a sonnet, this particular poem largely obeys a feudalizing logic providing us with an example of an animist poetic form that has been appropriated by a resurgent substantialism: "In its original form, the sonnet is typical of the animist matrix and, as happens in the case of the theater, is subsequently adopted by an organicism that "fills" the animist form with its own contents" (121). In the poem, Sor Juana generates a substantialist reading (and criticism) of the animist practice of portraiture that attempts to capture/reveal the truth/beauty of the soul on the canvas. Instead of accepting the lauded portrait of herself as a window into the soul of the poet, Sor Juana reads the portrait as a substantial sign of a higher truth that de-emphasizes the individual at the

center of the painting. The truth that Sor Juana wishes to call attention to is that of Divine Truth, in this case the Truth of the mortal body made of dust and the world as a place characterized by deceptive appearances. While artifice and deception are unavoidable in a fallen world, they must be very carefully navigated in order that one not be fooled by earthly appearances. As Rodríguez notes, the substantializing message is full of imagery that recalls death. Sor Juana's poetry often contains such imagery like in the following example:

145

Procura desmentir los elogios que a un retrato de la Poetisa inscribió la verdad, que llama pasión

Este, que ves, engaño colorido,
que del arte ostentando los primores,
con falsos silogismos de colores
es cauteloso engaño del sentido;
éste, en quien la lisonja ha pretendido
excusar de los años los horrores,
y venciendo del tiempo los rigores
triunfar de la vejez y del olvido,
es un vano artificio del cuidado,
es una flor al viento delicada,
es un resguardo inútil para el hado:
es una necia diligencia errada,
es un afán caduco y, bien mirado,
es cadáver, es polvo, es sombra, es nada. ("Sonnet 145" 168)

While for animist ideology, a portrait attempts to lay bare the truth, Sor Juana understands this kind of portraiture as having a deceptive function; for Sor Juana such a painting necessarily works against revelation and therefore can only be "read" as a substantial sign that confirms yet again the deceptive nature of the world. At the same time, the Christian version of the Carpe Diem theme in the poem aims at correcting the absence of this theme in the painted portrait; with her sonnet Sor Juana effectively extinguishes the image in the

portrait and replaces it with Truth. While the portrait in question, truer to animist ideology, freezes time to capture fleeting beauty and the essence of the soul (as expressed through the eyes gazing out at the observer), Sor Juana's poem works to restore the march of time in Christian terms; time will run out, corruption/death will come, and now is the time to prepare.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, however, Sor Juana's treatment of the Carpe Diem theme is not limited to examples only adhering to the substantializing logic characteristic of the poem included above. In another of her sonnets that also deals with the themes of the brevity of life and the role of destiny (*el hado*), the tone is not unlike that of Robert Herrick's also 17th century poem, *To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time*, that begins with the famous line "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may" (1248).[31] Like Herrick, Sor Juana here explores the fleetingness of time with an emphasis on the need to *savor* the moment. As Rodríguez explains, "it is the animist Carpe Diem which insists on the importance of mobility, and which recognizes the logic of *joy in the present"* (*Theory* 163):

148

Escoge antes el morir que exponerse a los ultrajes de la vejez

Miró Celia una rosa que en el prado
ostentaba feliz la pompa vana
y con afeites de carmín y grana

[31]This poem by Robert Herrick was published in 1648 and treats the Carpe Diem theme in a manner that contrasts significantly with the Christian sense that calls upon the sinner to repent and prepare his soul.

To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time
Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying:
And this same flower that smiles to-day
To-morrow will be dying.
The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun,
The higher he's a-getting,
The sooner will his race be run,
And nearer he's to setting.
That age is best which is the first,
When youth and blood are warmer;
But being spent, the worse, and worst
Times still succeed the former.
Then be not coy, but use your time,
And while ye may, go marry:
For having lost but once your prime,
You may for ever tarry. (1248)

bañaba alegre el rostro delicado;
    y dijo: –Goza, sin temor del Hado,
el curso breve de tu edad lozana,
pues no podrá la muerte de mañana
quitarte lo que hubieres hoy gozado;
    y aunque llega la muerte presurosa
y tu fragrante vida se te aleja,
no sientas el morir tan bella y moza:
    mira que la experiencia te aconseja
que es fortuna morirte siendo hermosa
y no ver el ultraje de ser vieja. (Juana, "Sonnet 148" 172)

The call to enjoy the present is clear and the assertion that the death that comes tomorrow cannot take away what is relished today seems almost audacious in comparison with the previous poem. The contradiction is sharp; as Rodríguez explains, while "for organicism, *change* (movement) serves as a signal both of the corruption of this world and of its brevity in the march toward death (sentiments that will be echoed in the baroque them of *disillusion*)" animism "will admit movement as something essential to the world, not as corruption but as the basis of this world's very perfection" (*Theory* 163). In the second poem, the world's perfection is evinced in the fleeting beauty of the rose; the movement from birth to death, from budding to blooming to wilting, *is* life. In the first poem and for substantialism, movement is but the passage into (eternal) life.

The fact that Sor Juana writes such contradictory sonnets treating the Carpe Diem theme so distinctly should not lead us to attempt to identify which of the two versions represented her true perspective. Both versions of the Carpe Diem theme cohabited the same historical period, and in this case both appear in the writing of one individual in a manner symptomatic of the contradictory nature of textual production of the transition. Even in spite of resurgent feudal relations, Sor Juana's poetry, not unlike that of Góngora's, "indicates the infrastructural permanence of the animist dialectic" (Rodríguez, *Theory* 163). Sor Juana's textual production is always eventually hybrid and contradictory, of dual ideological extraction,

in that she is constantly obligated to negotiate the intersection between *the Truth* of scholasticism and *the truth* of her individual experience. Again, the implication is not that the author was consciously aware of this fact, but rather that the specific contradictory nature of the writing (and of the ideological unconscious that produced it) was generated by the social relations themselves: "The point, Rodríguez believes, cannot be emphasized enough: in the last instance it is not the experience of individual agents that counts as much as the relevant ideological unconscious, operative on an ontological level that transcends that of the individual" (Read, *Latin* 10). The fact that the basic contradictions in play are operative largely on the unconscious level helps us not only to account for the high level of contradiction in Sor Juana's texts but also to explain the lack of any obvious awareness of this reality on the part of the author.

In many instances both in *La Respuesta* and in her poetry Sor Juana records with great and literal detail her personal observations of the world around her. In her *practice* of description as well as in many instances of her *practice* of poetry she employs without much effort the literal gaze/first person perspective of animism. When she begins to *theorize* about the meaning of the objects or events she describes, however, her text tends to take on decidedly scholastic/substantialist logic. Many of the textual examples studied in the earlier section on the impact of animist ideology in Sor Juana's writing are also crisscrossed with substantialist logic. Both her description of the spinning top and her utilization of her hair to measure time reveal the literal eye at work in the text, but in neither of these textual episodes is substantialist logic wholly absent. In the case of the spinning top, Sor Juana's prediction that the path the top would take would involve perfect circles is an example of a substantialist prediction made based on the fact that the *substantive shape* of the top was that of a perfect circle. According to substantialist logic, a round top should spin in a way that corresponds to the reality of its *shape/substance*. In the case of the episode where Sor Juana measures quite literally the speed of her learning according to the growth of her hair, she again ends the passage with a substantialist reading of her own cutting of her hair: "y con efecto le cortaba en pena de rudeza, que no me parecía razón que estuviese vestido de cabellos cabeza que estaba tan desnuda de noticias" (*Woman* 31). For substantialism, the body literally substantiates and

thus often reveals the truth of the individual, i.e., place in the social hierarchy, honor, intelligence, etc. In each such instance in the text, in the moment when Sor Juana waxes more theoretical, she also becomes decidedly more substantializing. In a similar fashion, while she is adamant about the fact that she should not be denied permission to write and study, when she has to say *why* this should be so, her reasons have little to do with individual rights as we understand them today, but rather with her God-given nature and her call to serve according to this nature. Sor Juana's conscious definition of what the individual *was*, i.e., a *servant*, was clearly overdetermined by a hegemonic feudalizing ideology. New Spain would have to wait for at least another century before the logic of subjectivity would be able to uproot and supplant the logic of service and begin to assert itself at the conscious level in notions such as those of *individual freedom* and *rights* more familiar to bourgeois ideology.

Sor Juana's inability to define her more animist practices in animist terms points to the degree to which feudal relations were able to reassert their dominance during her moment. She was an author who in effect participated in animist writing practices, but when called upon to define (and sometimes defend) writing/poetry, she could only do so in substantialist terms. Rodríguez observes a similar case of this historical effect of the transition in the case of Fernando de Herrera, who, like Sor Juana, wrote much lyric poetry, but when called upon to write about what poetry *was*, could only revert to a substantialist definition that was in many ways contradictory to the productive logic of his own poetic practice. Rodríguez describes the situation in the following manner beginning with the animist definition of poetry:

> (That is, "*Poetry*," defined as a production of the individual soul, and valued precisely for this reason. The *poet* or *artist* defined as the possessor of an individual soul, and one that is superior—or privileged—or, finally, truly beautiful. Poetic "works" esteemed to the extent that they successfully secrete such "beauty," etc.) Needless to say, this animist definition is conspicuous by its absence in Herrera. The latter, whose poetic practice was largely made possible and determined by the animist unconscious, is unable to recognize that same "logic" when he comes to theorize his practice. Consequently, he defines the "self" from two very traditional and feudalizing standpoints, beginning with the longing for immortality. This is the tendency basically

> inscribed in the man qua "serf," in other words, as someone who is dependent upon God and who is conscious that earthly life is nothing more than a deceitful passage toward the true, celestial life. […] Herrera's theoretical texts thus provide a perfect example not only of the (flagrant) contradiction between his own "practice" and his "theory," but also of certain firmly embedded contradictions, latent at the level of theoretical and ideological practice. We judge the latter to be characteristic of 16th–century Spain, considered as a historical conjuncture. (*Theory* 271-3)

The same contradictory logic applies to Sor Juana's work, as we have already observed in many textual examples—in her struggle to define silence, in her predictions about the path of the spinning top, and in the *substantializing* of her hair. In all of these cases one can observe a shift from the literal eye of perspectivism to an allegorical and/or substantializing reading characteristic of feudalizing ideology. In the well-known passage in *La Respuesta* where Sor Juana comments on the knowledge that women glean in the kitchen, a passage often misinterpreted as an early example of empiricism, substantialist ideology is in the mix. In this particular passage, *seeing* and *reading* are blended almost inextricably; the seemingly prevailing literalism of the passage remains fused with substantialist logic as Sor Juana evaluates the behavior of the yolk and the egg white according to their distinct *substances*:

> ¿Qué os pudiera contar, Señora de los secretos naturales que he descubierto estando guisando? Ver que un huevo se une y fríe en la manteca o aceite y, por contrario, se despedaza en al almíbar; ver que para que el azúcar se conserve fluida basta echarle una muy mínima parte de agua en que haya estado membrillo u otra fruta agria; ver que la yema y la clara de un mismo huevo son tan contrarias, que en los unos, que sirven para el azúcar, sirve cada una de por sí y juntos no. (*Woman* 63)

When Sor Juana speaks here of "secretos naturales" she is not speaking of the natural laws that will be discovered by empirical science, but of the secret (and Divine) Truth inscribed in each substance that determines its natural place and tendencies. These truths are only partially revealed in the fallen world and therefore must often be interpreted. Although the distinct behaviors of the yolk and the white are described in a seemingly purely literal fashion, more important is the close attention Sor Juana pays to the dissimilarities (and similarities) of

substances. Under substantialism, it is the affinity of substances that determines their interaction with one another. The distinct behaviors of the egg white and yolk when they are alternately mixed with sugar are understood by the nun as the expression of distinct substances obeying their God-given natures. The kitchen is the place where substances are mixed on a daily basis and in it serves Sor Juana very well as a metaphor for the natural world that is composed wholly of distinct substances that are all distinct mixtures of the four humors. In spite of the perspectivism that characterizes this passage at the superficial level, Sor Juana remains just as substantializing about the eggs as she is about the shape of the triangle and its relationship to the trinity, as described earlier in this chapter (60-2).

Just as the perspectivism that characterizes *La Respuesta* contradicts with the substantialist readings that also give structure to the text, Sor Juana's definition of poetry as the language of the Church and of the Holy Scriptures, or as the language of the Truth, does not align perfectly with the more animist extraction of much of her poetic production. Each of the dialectical movements in her texts described above derives from the radically historical contradictory ideological matrix that produced such contradictions as sonnets "filled" with feudalizing themes and a nun who defended the practice of writing lyric poetry and theatrical plays in terms of service to one's Lord.

1.6 Accomodating the "I"

The primary task of this chapter has been to ask and answer the following question: What kind of text is *La Respuesta*? For both Rodríguez and Read, it is impossible to comprehend the history of the subject of bourgeois relations without knowledge of the history of the feudal serf. The heavy presence of the "I" or of a strong proto-subject equipped with perspectivism (the ability to measure the surrounding world beginning with oneself as the measure of reference) is undeniable in Sor Juana's letter. While the proto-subject is present in the text, it is still with good reason defined as "proto" given the fact that Sor Juana does not represent a full-fledged subject in the way that modern bourgeois ideology understands. Sor Juana is as much servant as she is proto-subject and is constantly doubling back to *read*

allegorically (through a substantializing lens) the things she has literally *seen* (through animist eyes). The seeing I/eye that Rodríguez theorizes is prevalent in the text, but Sor Juana has no way to justify the presence of a strong ego given that the dominant ideology from within which she is writing is of feudalizing extraction and is struggling to hold the bourgeois "I" at bay. At this particular historical conjuncture, the literal eye that sees in Sor Juana's texts tends to fall back into scholastic substantialism whenever explanations for occurrences are necessary. While Sor Juana exhibits a strong ability to *describe* the world around her in very literal terms, this activity pertains to a new ideological matrix that has yet to become dominant in New Spain. Whenever Sor Juana must *explain* why something happens in the natural world or *defend* why she should be permitted to continue to read and write, her tendency is to produce substantialist justifications. In spite of the fact that she is already exhibiting some of the characteristics that will define the bourgeois subject, Sor Juana is part of a social hierarchy that does not yet operate according to this category. As a result, she can only attempt to accommodate the impact of the literal eye within the context of a still feudalizing framework.

Chapter Two: The Critical Marginalization of Sor Juana

Like Chapter One, this chapter begins by revisiting the body of critical analysis on Sor Juana in order to highlight and interrogate a number of specific commonplaces in this critical discourse. The selections in the first section of this chapter have been chosen because they are representative of the ways in which critical discourse on Sor Juana tends to construct her identity as a *marginalized individual* through categories such as *artist*, *intellectual, feminist*, all belonging to the bourgeois ideological matrix and potentially problematic when applied to a nun living in 17th century New Spain. It is important to examine Sor Juana's construction within literary criticism according to these categories in order to be able to challenge some of the fundamental claims that have produced a widespread tendency for an anachronistic understanding of her life. This chapter will further develop the present critique of the by now familiar depiction of Sor Juana as an intellectual visionary who looked to the future and imagined another reality, especially for women. Chapter Two examines Sor Juana's social status and her relationship to religion and the religious establishment in order to determine to what degree and by which standards she should (or should not) be classified as a marginalized figure. Finally, this chapter also analyzes the productive logic of the portrayal of the social hierarchy that appears in Sor Juana's texts in order to further refute the critical discourse that tends to inappropriately modernize her. Chapter Two argues that Sor Juana's writing participated in what was still a feudalizing understanding of the social hierarchy, but one that had ceased to fixate upon *blood* as its key category and emphasized *nature* instead. While Sor Juana's understanding of the social hierarchy did break with certain key features of feudal ideology proper, her work was still inscribed within a feudalizing framework. This chapter challenges again the idea that Sor Juana's literary contribution was birthed from the margins and against all odds, understanding the fascination bourgeois criticism holds for the figure of the marginalized artistic genius as a fascination with the key bourgeois category of the *subject*.

2.1 Recognizing again the historical *otherness* of the text

The complexities involved in comprehending the historicity of Sor Juana's writing are defined by the fact that her work is a product of the transition between feudalism and capitalism, her texts representing a point of convergence for two contradictory historical ideologies. As suggested in Chapter One, the amalgamation of substantialism and animism within the context of ideological production makes transitional texts less immediately ideologically recognizable for the modern subject/reader, whether or not said reader is aware of the ideological distance between himself or herself and the text in question, and the same is often true for the bourgeois literary critic. Although, as we have seen, contemporary critics are not entirely mistaken in their observation of certain traces of subjectivity in Sor Juana, the overwhelming tendency of critical discourse on the nun has been to focus on the textual elements that can be read as suggestive of modern sensitivities and inflate these to the point of textual and historical distortion. In short, the inability of the bourgeois critic to theorize outside of the bourgeois matrix, i.e. outside of the category of the *subject* (understood as transhistorical and universal), results in the application of the logic of subjectivity to all the elements in Sor Juana's texts. In the context of such criticism, the notion that Sor Juana was very much like us in her will to self-expression and her capacity for social critique is never in doubt. When the logic of subjectivity cannot be readily detected in a portion of her text, various results occur: 1) a critical effort is made to force Sor Juana's historical ideological production into the mold of bourgeois ideological production, 2) an explanation is given for why portions of her texts can be categorized as less relevant to comprehending Sor Juana and/or 3) certain portions of her texts are simply ignored altogether with no explanation given for their presumed irrelevance to the discussion. The role of many critics is to identify and make plain to the reader the presence of the subject at the heart of the text, even (and especially) when it is buried in contextual debris such as "baroque rhetoric", to give just one example. Rodríguez recognizes this process as one stemming from "the belief in the indubitable reality of the 'direct reading'," and describes the critical gesture involved in the following way:

> Such a belief assumes that any "human-reader-subject" can directly "read" ("understand," "enjoy," etc.) what another "human-writer-subject" has said in any

> circumstance in any age, for the simple reason that both the "writer-subject" and the "reader-subject" are always bound together, identified in their ultimate truth, by the true, global subject that includes them both, otherwise the "human spirit" in general, particularly as it operates within the literary realm. This reader-writer identity implies in turn that the work does not "exist," has no opacity and objectivity of its own, is not really "produced," that, in other words, it is only the point where the "human spirit" intersects with the "writer-subject" first, with "reader-subject" later. In consequence, "criticism" (whether "historicist" or "contemporary") will have as its mission to sweep away and leave clean the "crossroads" that is the text, by removing the lexical or epochal residue, clarifying it, so that direct access (the "immediate" reading) becomes possible. (*Theory* 134-5)

The attempt to perform a direct reading of Sor Juana's work often results in a specific set of critical conclusions, and the key categories for generating identification between reader and writer in this case are generally those of the *poet*/*artist*, the *intellectual/lover of knowledge,* the *colonized subject* and the *woman*, all assumed to be transhistorical categories capable of communicating the transhistorical truth of the human spirit. It is important to notice that all of the above mentioned categories have something significant in common—the fact that they are all very often associated with a marginalized status within bourgeois ideology. Although the bourgeois category of the artist/writer has undergone a certain amount of evolution since its initial appearance on the horizon of history, since at least the 19th century bourgeois ideology has tended to produce the notion of the artist as an individual situated on the margins of society, identifying this figure with a heightened perception of realities (social, spiritual, etc.) and the function, among others, of performing social critique. The critical treatment of Sor Juana, categorized as poet/intellectual/woman, is no exception to the rule and betrays the impetus of bourgeois ideology to continue to reproduce its key category of the free subject with exceptional fervor in the figure of the creative and self-expressive genius. In her critical introduction to Sor Juana's play, *Los empeños de una casa,* Susana Hernández Araico unblinkingly deploys the category of *artist,* together with all its contemporary attributes, with respect to Sor Juana:

> Success for an artist obviously depended—and still does—on a complex interplay between the patronage of the powerful or culturally elite and a wider appeal that necessarily entailed a criticism of the status quo. A child prodigy, Sor Juana thus rose to fame and fortune as her literary-theatrical talent was exploited by church and viceregal court to praise its own power. Within that dual structure, Sor Juana continually disguised her dissatisfaction, transcending established forms through an ever-spiraling mockery. (xxxi)[32]

Over and again in critical discourse, Sor Juana is depicted as having been situated on the outside, first as an *illegitimate child* somewhat embarrassed at her pedigree and situated on the margins of aristocratic circles, and then as an *intellectual* desirous of the pursuit of secular knowledge and therefore situated precariously on the margins of a religious society. Last but not least, she is represented as a *woman* positioned on the outside of the male establishment. Stephanie Merrim, for example, asserts that Sor Juana was persecuted for being both an *intellectual* and a *woman* ("Toward" 11) and describes her as a sort of literary "ventriloquist" whose voice was almost always buried in other voices (22). Ilan Stavans says of the nun that "One could ascribe to Sor Juana a psychological urgency to excel against all odds. Her road to success was blocked by obstacles, not the least of which was her gender" (xxxiii). Preferring almost always to imagine Sor Juana as the underdog, normative criticism constructs her as courageous and ingenious with respect to the aspects of her work that can be appropriated and recycled into bourgeois discourse. On the contrary, in the portions of her ideological production that cannot be easily translated into bourgeois discourse, Sor Juana is interpreted as having been reduced to subversive tactics as critics strive to reveal the oppressed subject hidden in the

[32] It is interesting to note here the emphasis in this quote on the function of the artist as social critic. Hernández Araico asserts that the critique of the status quo is inherent in artistic endeavor, but she does not pause to consider whether or not the category of artist (as we understand it today) was fully constituted as a historical reality during Sor Juana's moment. While Hernández Araico does acknowledge the fact that much of Sor Juana's work was commissioned by elite patrons, this fact does not seem to dissuade her from her quest to unveil the authentic and critical, even mocking, voice of Sor Juana ensconced within her texts. It is extremely problematic to surmise that Sor Juana understood herself to be and operated according to the logic of the category of "artist" as we understand it today, especially given the fact that Sor Juana only ever describes her writing as service. On what grounds, then, can Araico assume that Sor Juana's work "necessarily entailed a critique of the status quo"? The assumption that Sor Juana's writing represents one instance of the (transhistorical) expression of the artist/subject produces yet another ahistorical reading that attempts to infuse the nun's work with the logic of bourgeois subjectivity and its particular historical notion of the artist.

text. To be clear, it would be incorrect to suggest that Sor Juana faced no resistance to her scholarly endeavors. At the same time, however, the nature of her work, the nature of the resistance she faced and the logic of her self-defense have often been severely distorted in contemporary critical analysis. What is generally purged within the context of normative criticism is what Read refers to as the "historical otherness" of the text ("María" 198). The denial of such historical otherness is rampant in the criticism on Sor Juana as can be observed in the following quote from Stavans:

> In many ways "The Dream" is a companion to Sor Juana's *Response to Sor Filotea*: a manifesto promoting freedom of expression and elevating literature to a status higher than all other affairs, a modernist document transforming poetry into a new type of religion. This subversiveness explains why Sor Juana is a favorite today: she challenged the ecclesiastical status quo, but with a subtlety that confused her contemporaries; she fought for women's rights not with weapons but with poetry. (xli)[33]

The above statement by Stavans drastically foreshortens the ideological distance between the period of the transition and the present historical moment suggesting that the message of what is arguably Sor Juana's most opaque poetic composition, *Primer sueño,* is in all likelihood more transparent to the modern reader than it was to her contemporaries given Sor Juana's visionary status. According to Stavans, our identification with her very modern desire

[33] Stephanie Merrim speaks of *Primer sueño* in a fashion very similar to Stavans as she outlines strategies for approaching Sor Juana's work from a feminist perspective. Whether the critic is working to reveal the artist or the feminist in the text, the critical gesture is the same. In both cases, evidence of the self-expressive free subject will be produced:

> Whether the encodings of a woman writer or of a colonial Mexican, it is something of a truism by now that Sor Juana's Baroque, as manifested in the forbidden scientific explorations of the Primer sueño, surreptitiously filled the empty Spanish forms with audacious new content. Fleshing out this truism, we might seek out other messages ciphered into other texts, as well as examining in detail those verbal strategies, so akin to dreamwork, by means of which Sor Juana processed her models in order to achieve self-expression within another's language. ("Toward" 24)

In spite of the fact that most of Sor Juana's writing was the result of commissions from the Church and the palace, Merrim will always insist that the motor in the text is the will to self-expression. Merrim participates in the construction of a vision of Sor Juana that depicts her as one who simply desired to write and was obligated to make do in an oppressive historical context. Even if we were to accept Merrim's insistence upon Sor Juana's fervent and consuming desire for self-expression, the point that must be made is still the same. Such impulse for self-expression is radically historical and cannot be understood as deriving from any sort of transhistorical artistic drive. The quote by Merrim, like those of both Stavans and Araico, works toward the erasure of the historicity of the ideological category "artist", instead viewing this category as eternal and unpacking it with all the familiar trappings.

for and pursuit of freedom of expression explains her popularity in the 21st century. As is made plain in Stavans' statement, communication between distinct moments (i.e. erasure of historical distance) is a characteristic that defines his analysis. Identification between reader and writer (between subjects) is made possible, but comprehension of the historicity of the object is sacrificed, and the reading produced of Sor Juana's texts is one that does not correspond to historical reality.

Merrim's feminist critique of Sor Juana is similar to that of Stavans' in both its insistence upon identification and the resulting lack of historical perspective. Like Stavans, Merrim will always begin her analysis by assuming the presence of the *subject*, in this case, both *artist* and *feminist*, in the text. Instead of understanding subjectivity as a radically historical invention of the capitalist moment, the subject is lacking history in this kind of analysis, and as a result Merrim cannot adequately explain the more or less sporadic appearance of the "I" in Sor Juana's *Respuesta*.

> Sor Juana configures her 'I' strategically. […] far from a transparent self-representation, her 'I' becomes another prime weapon in Sor Juana's self-defense. The mercurial 'I' of the *Respuesta*, for example, assumes a new mask at each step, passing from *comedia* character to courtly lover (of learning) to chaste pastoral nymph. Oscillating dramatically as well between self-exaltation and denigration, the catachrestic 'I' pointedly testifies to the nun's instability, to her possession. ("Toward" 29)

For Merrim, the "oscillation" of what she refers to as Sor Juana's "mercurial 'I'" is understood as part of a conscious strategy on the part of the author and/or as the result of an all-consuming artistic fervor or "possession" (29). Either way, the will to self-expression is always the ultimate cause. What Merrim does not comprehend is that the "I" that seems to waver in the text should be attributed to the fact that the very notion of subjectivity was still not fully constituted in 17th century New Spain. Although Merrim describes Sor Juana as engaging in her *Respuesta* in the "construction—or deconstruction—of her *yo* or 'I'", when she uses the term "construction," she is not referring to *the historical production of subjectivity* in its early stages (29). For Merrim, the subject is never understood as historical; the subject always *is*, but can be constructed or configured and deconstructed and/or reconfigured at will by the transhistorical

subject itself. In other words, for bourgeois ideology, the very existence of the subject (always understood as a transhistorical reality) is what provides for the possibility of its construction, deconstruction and reconstruction. The fact that the eternal subject is the pre-condition for the construction of individual subjectivities can only mean that we are again confronted with a circular critical discourse that erases the historicity of its key categories, in this way legitimizing them as transhistorical realities.

The question then becomes how to explain the phenomenon, as witnessed by Merrim, of Sor Juana's narrative "I" that wavers between confident enunciation and uncertainty without assuming that it is simply the result of a conscious strategy to assert humility on the part of the nun. As we have already seen in the previous chapter, one crucial difference between normative criticism and historical materialist criticism lies in the issue of causality. In the examples of normative criticism described above, the subject is posited as the ultimate cause, even in texts characterized by an apparent lack of individual expression where subjects are understood as oppressed or masked. In the case of the present analysis, the equation is altogether different; class struggle or contradiction is understood to be the motor of history and the symptoms of this struggle are presumed to be visible in the ideological production of any given moment. If Sor Juana's textual production is involved in the *historical production of subjectivity* this means that the notions of *individual truth, interior or private space* and *personal perspective* are quite literally being forged in her work, even as they collide with other contradictory notions pertaining to the feudal ideological matrix. The oscillation in the text between a self-confident "I" and an almost groveling counterpart that begs Sor Filotea's pardon is evidence of the historical intersection of the emerging "I" or the *beautiful and rational soul* of early bourgeois relations and the still dominant feudal conception of the individual as *servant*. The contradiction between the individual that enunciates itself via the notion of the *servant* and the individual that enunciates itself via the notion of the *rational soul* is the contradiction that defines the period of the transition and much of the ideological production of this moment. And here is the crucial point: It is erroneous to assume that one or the other of these two identities was somehow false or contrived. Stated another way, contemporary criticism is mistaken when it postulates that both identities in the text, the servant and the rational soul,

are but distinct strategies that Sor Juana utilizes in gauging the expression of her subjectivity. In such criticism the strong rational "I" is understood as revealing more of the truth regarding Sor Juana's identity while the servile voice demonstrates her awareness of the realities of her historical moment and her capacity to evade persecution by authorities. For normative criticism, the subject is always in control of the text, even if the expression of the truth of the subject must be cleverly disguised. Again, the tendency of such criticism is to comprehend all features of the text as resulting from a conscious process crafted by the subject that represents the individual truth that informs the text.

Returning for a moment to Merrim's analysis, the predilection for extracting textual elements that can be most easily appropriated by bourgeois discourse is clear, but elements that do not so readily resemble bourgeois discourse are explained quite handily as well. Recalling the quote above, the "I" in the text is configured, according to Merrim, "strategically" and often makes use of "masks" (29). The use of the term "mask" makes it clear that the critic believes that Sor Juana is fully aware of the construction of her camouflage and it also allows for the critic to take great liberties when describing the reality hidden behind the mask. Such a reading involves converting the surface of the text into a mask that must be peered behind in order to get at the internal truth of the author, and the mask itself is also understood as part of a conscious strategy on the part of the author. If the goal is to clear the path for identification between the author and the reader (the connection between souls that continues to define the logic of bourgeois subjectivity), then the categorization of the text as *mask* serves as a convenient vehicle for steering around textual elements that are incompatible with the notion of subjectivity that defines and motivates the liberal critical analysis. The transformation of portions of the text into mask serves to bring the entire text into line with the notion of subjectivity that defines the critical discourse in question: the subject is always the origin, i.e., always expressed in the text and in the image produced, regardless of whether it presents itself as a unified and confident whole or as fragmented and subservient. Once again, the notion of *text as mask* emphasizes the marginal status of the author in question, positing the poet or artist as outsider who needs to skirt authority. Not only is the reality of the subject reasserted, but the bourgeois notion of the *artist as outsider* as well.

The key categories of bourgeois ideology are assumed to be transhistorical realities that allow for direct comparisons between texts from radically distinct historical moments. Accordingly, not only is Sor Juana labeled a feminist, but she also shares "striking similarities" with both women who were her contemporaries as well as with other women who wrote at a much later date. It is not abnormal, for example, to find Sor Juana likened to Virginia Woolf (Merrim, "Toward" 26). Merrim is but one of several critics who traces parallels between Juana Inés and Woolf depicting a Sor Juana who "militantly defends a woman's right to education" (22). The critic never pauses to consider whether or not one can really speak of a "defense of rights" in 17th century New Spain. Also left unquestioned is the issue of which specific *women* might be included in Sor Juana's defense of women, and the reader is led to assume that Sor Juana intended to defend all women.

In his article, *María de Zayas and her critics: notes toward the history of the unconscious*, Malcolm Read observes this same kind of ahistorical modernization occurring within recent critical analysis of the work of Sor Juana's peninsular contemporary, María de Zayas, yet another author whose writing has been labeled as "strikingly similar" to more modern texts and categorized as early feminist. As Read explains,

> [I]t is always possible to draw Zayas into the horizon of liberal orthodoxy and, on the basis of an epistemological relativism that reduces everything to the level of discourse, to generate "striking similarities" (Brownlee 1995: 108) between her politics and current feminist concerns. After all, texts are vulnerable to ideological manipulation of every kind. (197)

It should not come as a surprise that multiple critical texts on Sor Juana contain chapters dedicated to comparing and contrasting the writing of the nun to that of María de Zayas. In all likelihood, a comparison of such texts could prove very useful for working out the precise productive logic of the defense of women found in each of these authors. As Read has noted in the case of Zayas, however, the bulk of critical discourse is dedicated not to discovering the radical historicity of her texts, but to demonstrating the ardent feminist concerns contained therein. As a result, from the start the critical emphasis is predicated upon revealing the impulse for independence and self-expression that supposedly drives these texts. It is in this

will to self-expression against all odds that contemporary criticism establishes the sorority of transitional texts with works produced at much later dates and in very distinct historical moments, and it is this kind of negation of historicity that allows for the effortless comparison of Sor Juana to Virginia Woolf in spite of the fact that their respective bodies of work represent very distinct kinds of ideological production. What is consistently absent in what Read refers to as the "liberal orthodoxy" within criticism is the simple fact that the defense of women that can be identified in texts like those written by Sor Juana and Zayas is still, in many ways, feudalizing. Little if any attention is paid to the fact that the productive logic of Sor Juana and Zayas' defenses of women simply do not share the same logic that informs a 19th century bourgeois defense of women. Many readings produced by feminist scholars are characterized by a drastically foreshortened view of history. When Merrim compares Sor Juana and Zayas, on multiple occasions she describes both women as defenders of women's rights reacting to the heightened misogyny of the 17th century. Zayas in particular is described as "the most unabashed, militant Hispanic feminist of her age" whose work represented "repeated, strident cries for women's education," "the central plank in Zayas' feminist platform" (*Early* xxxvi). While it is true that Sor Juana defended women in the face of an ever-increasing misogynist clampdown, it is highly questionable to label her defense of women as *feminist*. The same holds true for the case of Zayas. (The arguments in Chapter Four work toward historicizing Sor Juana's defense of women.) In direct contrast to the anachronism that plagues much of the feminist scholarship on both Zayas and Sor Juana, Read's article on Zayas represents an effort to recover the historicity of texts that have been appropriated by feminist scholarship and distorted through the production of this particular kind of feminist reading. Although Read does observe a defense of women in Zayas, his contention is that this defense is constructed according to a feudal and not feminist, otherwise bourgeois, logic. The difference between Merrim's and Read's discussions of the texts in question is stark:

> [W]hat Zayas' texts actually say, insistently, is that we are sinners, whose only obligation is to *confess* our guilt. The world, we are assured, is approaching its end; things go from bad to worse; men have grown effeminate under French influence; the old virtues, notably, valor, have been lost; and the laws of chivalry have been abandoned and with

> them the defense of women (1983: 507). Such is the logic not of a postmodern liberalism, focused as it is upon issues of gender equality, but of a seigniorial organicism, of eminently feudal extraction, based on a hierarchy of 'blood' and 'lineage.' (Read, "María" 197-8)

Although one is often hard-pressed to find much discussion in most contemporary criticism on Sor Juana of the impact of feudal ideology in her texts, she, like Zayas, did have much to say about feudalizing notions such as *service*, *sin*, *pride*, *salvation*, and the list goes on. In the letter in which she divorces herself from her confessor, Núñez de Miranda, a document that has come to be known as Sor Juana's *Autodefensa* or *Autodefensa espiritual* and one that is often regarded as the most explicit expression of her frustration with certain of her superiors and the misogynist climate in general, the feudalizing religiosity of the document is patent. While the letter does defend women's pursuit of knowledge, knowledge is always placed in the service of salvation. In the *Autodefensa*, Sor Juana writes on the compatibility between letters and salvation and expresses her need to find a spiritual father who understands and accepts her and can shepherd her natural and God-given inclination to study:

> pero los privados y particulares estudios ¿quién los ha prohibido a las mujeres? ¿No tienen alma racional como los hombres? […] ¿Las letras estorban, sino que antes ayudaban a la salvación? ¿No se salvó San Agustín, Sam Ambrosio y todos los demás Santos Doctores? Y V. R. cargado de tantas letras, ¿no piensa salvarse? […] Dios me inclinó a eso y no me pareció que era contra su ley santísima […] yo tengo este genio […] nací con él y con él tengo que morir […] Pues, ¿por qué para salvarse ha de ir por el camino de la ignorancia si es repugnante a su natural? ("Carta" 642-3)

There is much to be worked out here, especially regarding Sor Juana's constant tendency to define her affinity for study as part of her nature, a topic to be revisited in greater depth before the end of this chapter. For now, what needs to be reasserted is the fact that the above text is historically incomprehensible without the notion of the feudal servant whose primary task in life is that of working out his/her salvation. While Sor Juana never separates the act of writing from the notion of service, contemporary criticism's modernizing and feminist reading consistently reproduces its own notion of *author/subject* and consequently tends to strip the

servant from the text. For example, Merrim says the following about the *Autodefensa*:

> The *Autodefensa* is a personal letter written by Sor Juana to her confessor, Antonio Núñez de Miranda, approximately ten years before the *Respuesta* in which she breaks with him, complaining of another act of persecution, his public defamation of her person. Though in many ways a blueprint for the *Respuesta*, and touching on several of the same topics, the language and argumentation of the *Autodefensa* are shockingly different. *Rather than the unctuous rhetoric of subordination, here we find assertive and biting invective with no subterfuges; these few pages deflate the many concerted efforts on the part of exegetes to render Sor Juana a servile saintly nun* (emphasis added). ("Toward" 28)

Even though it is true that the *Autodefensa* exhibits a self-assurance that is somewhat lessened by the time Sor Juana writes her *Respuesta*, Merrim's negation of the logic of service that informs both texts is simply impossible to reconcile with Sor Juana's own statements and with the ideological reality of the historical moment in question. The nun's letter to her confessor begins by asking Núñez de Miranda to clarify why he equates her practice of poetry with sin: "y dígame V. R. (ya que en su opinión es pecado hacer versos) ¿en cuál de estas ocasiones ha sido tan grave delito de hacerlos?" ("Carta" 640). Sor Juana maintains throughout that her poetry was always written at the behest of her superiors in the Court, and after naming a number of saintly lettered women from the past, she asks: "Pues ¿por qué en mí es malo lo que en todas fue bueno? ¿Sólo a mí me estorban los libros para salvarme?" (643). Finally, at the end of the letter, she states with confidence that "en querer más que en saber consiste el salvarse y esto más estará en mí que en mi confesor" (646). In every instance, Sor Juana makes plain her careful consideration regarding the relationship between *letters* and *salvation*. While her confidence regarding the need to separate herself from Núñez de Miranda cannot be denied, Sor Juana did not operate outside of feudalizing ideology; like Zayas', her text is rife with the substantialist preoccupations of *sin*, *service* and *salvation* even as she defends the position that to study and to write will not endanger her salvation. The fact that her writing exhibits a strong perspectivism (evidence of a proto-subject operating in the text) inevitably contributes to its susceptibility to the kinds of "ideological manipulation" described above by Read, resulting in

readings that fail to detect the still feudalizing logic that impacts these texts. Both Zayas and Sor Juana, however, represent authors whose writing continues in distinct ways and to distinct degrees to produce *servants*.

As mentioned earlier in this section, the contradiction between *servant* and *rational soul* marks Sor Juana's textual production throughout. In her letter to Núñez de Miranda, Sor Juana defends her integrity as a servant of God and her superiors, but she simultaneously defends her actions as based upon her own capacity for rational thought. According to Sor Juana, service to God and her superiors must flow from exercise of one's free will and reason:

> Pues, Padre amantísimo (a quien forzada y con vergüenza insto lo que no quisiera tomar en boca), ¿cuál era el dominio directo que tenía V. R. para disponer de mi persona y del albedrío (sacando el que mi amor le daba y le dará siempre) que Dios me dio? […] Si es mera caridad, parezca mera caridad, y proceda como tal, suavemente, que el exasperarme no es buen modo de reducirme, ni yo tengo tan servil naturaleza que haga por amenazas lo que no me persuade la razón, ni por respetos humanos lo que no haga por Dios. (643-4)

Admittedly, the contradiction is thick in the above passage where the call to obey and the exercise of reason seem to collide with force. Within the context of contemporary criticism, however, this contradiction is misrecognized as part of a conscious construction of subjectivity; the servant still produced in these texts, if it is acknowledged at all, is read as the cunning mask of the oppressed subject/woman/writer forced to disguise her drive for self-expression in order to protect herself[34]. As Read explains with reference to the case of Zayas, the thrust of such criticism is to "transmute" feudalizing ideology "into liberal terms" in a way that summarily negates "the ineradicable, historical 'otherness'" of the text at hand ("María" 198). Thus the direct reading described by Rodríguez is completed and the objectivity of the text is lost.

While the impulse of normative criticism is to clear the path for identification between subjects, the goal of this project is to clear away some of the ahistorical readings that clutter

[34] Ironically, in the case of her discussion of the *Autodefensa*, Merrim simply ignores the logic of service that informs the letter throughout even suggesting that this may be one of the only texts in which we can appreciate "Sor Juana's true voice" and "a Sor Juana with no mask" ("Toward" 28). Again, her analysis begs the question: what then are we to make of Sor Juana's insistence upon writing as service?

the path to comprehending the productive logic that informs Sor Juana's texts. In order to make visible the historicity of the text, it is necessary to return to even the most basic of questions and ask, for example, what it meant to write in 17th century in New Spain. What happened to the figure of the author that had appeared under animism when feudal relations were once again dominant? The key contradiction in the texts in question between the proto-subject of bourgeois relations and the feudal servant has to be understood as a result of the contradictory nature of the transition between two distinct modes of production, each with their accompanying ideological unconsciousness. Such contradiction, it must be said, is not part of a conscious, global textual scheme, the product of "an astute intellectual […] navigating very carefully within limitations of which she was keenly aware" (Hernández Araico xix). Nor can it be explained as Merrim would have it as self-masking strategies ("Toward" 28-9) or as Sabat de Rivers insists, as "a form of rebellion" (83). These approaches to the text portray Sor Juana as an artist trapped in a hostile context and fully aware of her historical situation.

The following sections of this chapter examine some of the various forms that the depiction of Sor Juana's marginalization takes, the first being the claim that Sor Juana's birthright represented a major obstacle and constant threat of possible ostracism. The present reading also contests the depiction of Sor Juana as an outsider with respect to her religious convictions, questioning the claim that Sor Juana's scholarly pursuits can be described as *secular* and *rebellious,* terms that are also synonymous with the familiar label of "ahead of her time." The present project understands Sor Juana as an individual who operated inside religion and who in many ways benefited from her social status; as "la autora oficial del virrenato", Sor Juana was a woman with considerably more status, power, authority and command of her personal situation than is often portrayed (Monterde x).

2.2 The issue of illegitimacy

One of the traits that define much of recent critical analysis on Sor Juana is the tendency to depict Juana Inés as a woman who achieved a high level of recognition in spite of what are often described as humble beginnings, not the least being the fact of her birth to an unwed and

illiterate criolla woman. The story of the young Juana Inés who desired to learn and devoured the books in her grandfather's library only to eventually find herself situated at the heart of the viceregal palace is by now familiar to the field of Hispanism. It is an account that has a certain "rags to riches" ring to it and is without a doubt a narrative that constructs a *subject* hewn from bourgeois ideological categories. It is the kind of story we love to tell, complete with a profound and tragic ending—the story of the underdog who rises to success only to be snuffed out by oppressive forces that do not comprehend his or her genius. But as captivating as this version of her life may be, its historical accuracy is questionable, in part because of the ways in which it distorts the issue of social class.

Because much of contemporary literary criticism is marked by an aversion to historical materialism, rejecting as too mechanistic and deterministic materialist approaches interested in deciphering the impact of class struggle in the process of history, such criticism often has little to say about the relevance of class. In the case of the scholarship on Sor Juana, postmodernist feminist criticism of her writing often exhibits a fascination for the figure of the underdog while at the same time declining to engage in a serious discussion of class. This being said, criticism on the nun's work has not failed to point out that when Sor Juana stated that women should be allowed to study and teach (always within defined limits), she was not speaking of all women, but only of women of certain social status. Even so, many critics, if they do choose to acknowledge this, seem to simply accept Sor Juana's classism as characteristic of her time period, an inevitable deficiency in her reasoning owing to her historical moment, a flaw in early feminist discourse and something that would have to be gradually corrected over the centuries. Given its eagerness to distill an early feminism from Sor Juana's texts, much of the postmodern feminist criticism of her work focuses on the category of "women" to such an extent that it eclipses other categories that should be afforded at least equal consideration in the discussion of her work. Including at best a largely superficial discussion of Sor Juana's class status, most postmodern feminist critics rapidly move on to arguments that highlight her status as *woman* and the difficulties she faced as such. The dismissal of class as an important factor for consideration creates blind spots in such analyses of her texts encouraging a vision of her, above all, as a woman suffering under ever increasing patriarchal oppression, while ignoring that in

reality, she most likely wielded a fair amount of power given her criolla status, her status as a nun, her relationship with the palace, and her relationship with certain members of the clergy. When attention is paid to her social status in terms of class, the argument often focuses on Sor Juana's illegitimate birth, yet another detail which critics often highlight in order to paint a picture of the nun as a vulnerable member of her society rather than a person invested with a considerable amount of authority. It is perhaps important to consider for a moment, however, the possibility that in all reality Sor Juana enjoyed a position of certain privilege that provided her with a platform from which to speak.

In many discussions about Sor Juana, her illegitimacy is regarded as a stain upon her otherwise exemplary person, and she is portrayed as having skillfully averted ostracization in circles of privilege in spite of this embarrassing blemish. In somewhat confusing passages on the subject, both Sabat de Rivers and Paz describe her illegitimacy as having been problematic but ultimately of little consequence with reference to Sor Juana's access to the palace and the convent. Both of these critics end up contradicting themselves as they analyze "Epigram 95" in which the nun contests rumors of dishonorable origins:

> El no ser de padre honrado,
> fuera defecto, a mi ver,
> si como recibí el ser
> de él, se lo hubiera yo dado.
> Más piadosa fue tu Madre,
> que hizo que a muchos sucedas:
> para que, entre tantos, puedas
> tomar el que más te cuadre. ("Epigrama 95" 110)

Both Sabat de Rivers and Paz interpret the poem above as evidence of the nun's nervousness regarding her birth, but neither comment upon the fact that this statement is indicative of the continued importance placed upon lineage within the social hierarchy nor upon the fact that Sor Juana here seems to exhibit a significant amount of confidence regarding her name. Paz's discussion of the issue is especially contradictory as he highlights both Sor Juana's unease regarding her status and the audacity of what he describes as a "savage" epigram, daring

anyone to question her lineage further (*Traps* 66). Was she ashamed of her parents' unmarried status or was the confidence here expressed regarding her personal pedigree genuine? In the end Paz is forced to acknowledge that neither Sor Juana nor the other members of her family seemed to suffer clear negative consequences owing to the unmarried status of Doña Isabel Ramírez, Sor Juana's mother. In fact, as Paz explains, all of Sor Juana's maternal relatives were criollos, members of society who owned land, married well, obtained positions in the military and the church and enjoyed contact with the viceregal palace (66-7). Paz also makes note of the fact that the convents themselves were not accessible to those of inferior rank: "The convent in which she took her vows, San Jerónimo, was reserved for criolla women" (66). Domínguez Ortiz's description of "las ordenes femeninas" in his book, *Las clases privilegiadas de la España del Antiguo Régimen*, corroborates Paz's statement with respect to women religious and regarding the exclusivity of the convents. Domínguez Ortiz explains that access to the monastic life was more limited for women than for men given the fact that more donations were made to establish masculine orders. As a result, women who entered convents were required to provide a substantial dowry and in many cases had to prove their status as nobility in order to be admitted (*Clases* 321-2). Paz depicts the grown Sor Juana as a woman who did not often mention her father, but when she did, he maintains, it was always "in order to refer to her Basque ancestry" (*Traps* 74). Not unlike the Inca Garcilaso, it seems, Sor Juana was an American daughter of New Spain proud of the Spanish blood flowing in her veins and one who occasionally seized upon the opportunity to mention the fact. Given the clear indicators of her criolla status, it is hard to understand why Paz insists in later chapters of his work that illegitimacy was such a grave concern for Sor Juana. In describing the contents of Doña Isabel's will, he argues that Sor Juana's mother effectively corroborated her blemish in birthright in defining Juana as an illegitimate child with the tell-tale phrase, "daughter of the Church." Paz and other critics have noted that in her will, Doña Isabel states plainly and without reserve that her children were fathered by two different men, neither of whom she married, and whose names she records in full in the same document (Hernández Araico xvi). But if it were really so important for these facts to be obscured in order to protect reputations, then why would Sor Juana's mother publish them so readily?

In his discussion of the controversy surrounding Sor Juana's illegitimate status, Ilan Stavans comes to a somewhat less contradictory conclusion than Paz as he works to dispel some of the mystique that tends to characterize critical discourse regarding this issue. According to Stavans, Sor Juana's birthright was likely not as problematic an issue as has so often been repeated.

> What is certain is that, just like her two sisters, Sor Juana was a "natural" child—that is, born out of wedlock. How this fact marked her vision of the world and her standing in society is a controversial issue among *sorjuanistas*. Apparently she repeatedly tried to hide her illegitimacy. Indeed, several critics believed it was at the core of Sor Juana's existential dilemma and is the main reason for her becoming a nun. But this might be an exaggeration. "Natural" children were common in New Spain, not only among the lower classes but among nuns and viceroys. (Fray Payo Enríquez de Rivera, a.k.a. Don Payo, appointed viceroy of New Spain in 1674 and one of Sor Juana's protectors, for instance, was also illegitimate.) Not only could one find all sorts of ways to ameliorate the impact of one's "natural" birth, but the fact that this was a common occurrence reduces its stigmatization. (xxiii)

Stavans is not the only contemporary critic who questions the tendency to view Sor Juana's birthright as having had a significant negative impact upon her life course. Both Hernández Araico and Kirk quote Paz as they defend, like Stavans, the position that Sor Juana's pedigree was perhaps less of a problem than is generally posited. Hernández Araico emphasizes the criolla status of Sor Juana's mother and then goes on to remind the reader that "Octavio Paz points out that a number of Sor Juana's closest female relatives were likewise either illegitimate or gave birth out of wedlock, yet enjoyed considerable social acceptance and attained a degree of financial stability" (xvi). Kirk, like Stavans and Hernández Araico, acknowledges the "controversy over Sor Juana's illegitimacy", but insists, again quoting Paz, that Sor Juana's situation was not outside of the norm; "Paz, on the other hand, explores Sor Juana's family tree as an example of a typical well-connected "middle class" family containing numerous long lasting illegitimate unions" (Kirk 18).

In the citations above, various terms are used interchangeably to describe Sor Juana's

social status, including “illegitimate”, “natural”, and “daughter of the Church”. Paz prefers the term “illegitimate” while Stavans uses “illegitimate” and “natural” synonymously and Kirk explains that “daughter of the Church” was “a euphemism for illegitimate” (18). The conflation of these three terms, as common as it is in recent Sor Juana criticism, is problematic and creates confusion at a very basic level regarding her social status. The critics mentioned above all have difficulty resolving the contradiction between the illegitimacy *and* privilege that supposedly defined Sor Juana’s experience, an indication that further historicizing regarding the feudal designations “illegitimate”, “natural”, and “daughter of the Church” may be necessary. As a first step, it is important to clear up some of the confusion by examining more closely the historical meaning of each of these three terms, but it also has to be emphasized that there is much more at stake than a simple misuse of terminology; the confusion surrounding this topic reveals bigger problems at work in the critical analysis of Sor Juana.

A paragraph from Heath Dillard’s study of medieval women’s lives in Castilian society, *Daughters of the Reconquest*, sheds some helpful light on the issue at hand as she delineates the important difference between *illegitimate* and *natural* children. In her chapter on mistresses (*barraganas*) and abducted wives, Dillard explains that both of these figures were commonplace in the feudal world, and that *barraganas* especially were an accepted phenomenon not necessarily looked down upon as long as they did not interrupt a marriage contract. Oftentimes, a woman became the *barragana* of a man she hoped to someday marry, certainly a plausible explanation for the case of Sor Juana’s mother who may very well have hoped to marry the Basque captain who was Sor Juana’s father. As Dillard explains, the children of such mistresses, even when born out of wedlock, were still integrated into society *according to their pedigree* and could often expect to inherit from their fathers.

> The *barragana* of a bachelor or widower could readily entertain aspirations for her children. Not all illegitimate children were barred from inheritance, only those born 'in adultery'. Aragonese and canonical sources call them children who 'ought not to have been born', the ill-starred children of 'condemned coitus'. These terms refer not to children of unmarried parents but only to those whose father or mother was married to someone else at the time they were born. The children of a bachelor's or widower's

barragana were simply natural children. These inherited from both parents unless their paternity was in doubt, or they were edged out by the legitimate children their father sired. (129)

In the case of Sor Juana, Doña Isabel's will is a clear indicator of the *natural* status of her children and the fact that she expected them to inherit according to the laws pertaining to natural children. During her lifetime, Sor Juana's status in official registries was always recorded as reported by herself and by her mother as *legitimate* and/or *natural* (Kirk 18). Doña Isabel affirms the status of her children by explaining in her will that she had remained single but had six natural children, the first three with Pedro Asbaje and then three more with Diego Ruiz Lozano. The fact that neither Sor Juana nor her mother ever referred to Juana Inés as "illegitimate" may have had very little to do with any attempt to hide illegitimacy, as critics have previously supposed. In reality, it seems quite plausible that although married status was regarded as preferable, it was not necessary for producing legitimate and socially accepted children; neither Sor Juana nor her mother nor the society in which they lived seemed to view Sor Juana as illegitimate. She was not after all and as far as was recorded, the product of an adulterous union. Being a "natural child", she represented one kind of "legitimate child" and as such her lineage was not in doubt and neither her mother's honor nor hers was compromised by the circumstances of her birth. Viewed in light of Dillard's explanation of the term "natural", it seems highly possible that Sor Juana's birthright was much less of an obstacle than is often maintained, a thesis that seems to resonate with the evidence that suggests that Sor Juana did indeed enjoy many societal privileges that corresponded to her status, first as an educated criolla whose blood was of Spanish origin and later as a member of the religious establishment.

Sor Juana's class status as *criolla* is also cast in contemporary critical work, such as that of Sabat de Rivers, as having been a sort of obstacle for Sor Juana rather than a source of privilege. For Sabat de Rivers, Sor Juana fought to express herself *in spite of* her identity as woman/criolla[35]. Hernández Araico does question to a certain degree the idea that Sor Juana's

[35] In her arguments, Sabat de Rivers, not unlike Paz, finds traces of an early Mexican national sentiment and a colonial and colonized sense of identity in Sor Juana's texts at a moment when the call for Mexican independence was still more than a century away.

> Desde una perspectiva política llaman la atención los paralelos que pueden establecerse entre el problema de la mujer escritora con respecto a la utilización del lenguaje masculino y las implicaciones de

birthright held an altogether negative impact, but she also remains convinced that the circumstances of her birth did in fact determine her life path in significant ways, including her possibilities for marriage. Hernández Araico states that:

> Born out of wedlock, Sor Juana was absolutely deprived of the possibility of marriage within the aristocratic social rank that would have certainly afforded her leisure for reading, writing and other intellectual pursuits. […] By joining a convent, she thus secured a respectable niche within the aristocratic society where she had matured. (xvii)

Unfortunately, Hernández Araico does not support with any historical evidence her claim that Sor Juana was "absolutely deprived of the possibility of marriage" within a social rank that would have been acceptable, a claim would seem to require further confirmation, but it is the critic's second statement that is perhaps more relevant to our discussion as she appears to indicate that Sor Juana was in fact an integral member of an aristocratic circle and that the society in which she lived afforded a place to each person according to his or her pedigree while taking into account blemishes of birthright. What is clear in the historical accounts is that within the still feudally organized hierarchy of the 17th century, social status was still most certainly connected to blood. In *Las clases privilegiadas en la España del Antiguo Regimen*, historian Domínguez Ortiz describes the clergy of the 17th century as a sort of repository for the children of aristocrats. According to Domínguez Ortiz, a position in the Church hierarchy was often sought for bastard children of the aristocratic class who could not expect to procure a suitable marriage contract:

> ese mismo lenguaje en la problemática de la descolonización y 'la apropiación del signo' por parte del 'sujeto colonial.' (32-3)

Again, problematic here is the fact that Sor Juana's identity is discussed in terms familiar to the bourgeois matrix with no consideration for her rank and privilege within the feudal hierarchy and its institutions. We are encouraged to understand the nun as having successfully expressed herself against all odds when quite possibly we would do well to consider that it was her position of privilege that allowed her to speak and even question her superiors. What's more, when reading Sor Juana's work one is hard-pressed to find any discussion that can really be described as exhibiting a national sentiment, let alone a specifically Mexican national sentiment. When such a thesis is defended within the context of contemporary criticism, passages where Sor Juana mentions the indigenous population are inevitably invoked, but as is to be expected, the fact that the nun's depiction of the indigenous population always works to insert the indigenous peoples into the social hierarchy according to the Christian narrative is afforded little attention. In spite of her social status and her adherence to the Catholic understanding of the world, Sor Juana is never depicted as part of the Spanish colonizing other but rather as someone who opened a space for the indigenous voice within the context of her writing.

> Algunos de estos prelados fueron bastardos de grandes señores; en parte, esto era solo un aspecto de la tendencia general a procurar una situación conveniente en la Iglesia a los que, por defecto de nacimiento, podían encontrar dificultades para encontrarla en el siglo […] A la vista de estos hechos no pueden parecer exageradas las palabras de un reciente biógrafo del patriarca Ribera: «Basta repasar el catálogo de la jerarquía de aquel tiempo para convencernos que algunas sedes estaban reservadas a los bastardos como en herencia.» (223-4)

Although strictly speaking Sor Juana was neither a member of the upper nobility nor a bastard child—as described above, she is better classified as a criolla and a natural child—she was a person of higher social status than most and as such she was clearly interested in securing a station that corresponded to her rank. Whether or not Sor Juana's birthright barred her from acceptable marriage contracts or not is not entirely clear, but even if this were the case, what has to be emphasized, in contrast to the claims made in much of normative criticism, is the fact of Sor Juana's position of privilege. Not only did she enjoy access to the viceregal palace, but she was also eventually afforded entry into the feminine clerical class, generally a more exclusive circle than the masculine orders, according to Domínguez Ortiz as mentioned above.

Both Domínguez Ortiz and Dillard's works of history provide information that helps to shed light on the conditions of life in a still feudalizing social hierarchy. Dillard's explanation of the terms "natural" and "illegitimate" is very helpful for discussing the issue of birthright with respect to the case of Sor Juana, but the fact remains that the confusion surrounding this issue in Sor Juana is caused by misconceptions operating at a level deeper than that of mere terminology. In reality, it is the *theory of history* in operation that is ultimately responsible for the history produced, and in light of this reality, the present concern is not so much to correct the errors in the orthodox biographical account of Sor Juana's life, but rather to show that much of contemporary criticism lacks an adequate theory of history and as a result simply reproduces its own historical categories.

Even if there has been some effort on the part of critics to set at least some of the facts straight regarding the degree to which Sor Juana's birth impacted her life path, this effort has been fraught with a confusion symptomatic of a much larger problem—the fact that there is a

very limited interest in developing an understanding of feudalism and its impact in the ideological production of authors such as Sor Juana. If each of the critics mentioned above participates to varying degrees in an attempt to dispel the assumption that illegitimacy represented a major obstacle to Sor Juana's fulfilling her aspirations, none of them is able to successfully explain the contradictory situation they describe. In other words, how it could have been possible in a society still organized according to a feudal hierarchy of bloods, that one's illegitimacy could have relatively little impact? None of the above critics is sufficiently familiar with the logic of feudal society to advance the issue any further, and the result is often a contradictory and confusing analysis of this topic. The fact that the impact of Sor Juana's illegitimacy is perhaps less emphasized than before in certain critical analyses does not mean that the tendency to both modernize Sor Juana and view her as a marginal figure has been significantly reduced. As we saw earlier, Stavans describes *Primer sueño* as "a modernist document" and as we shall see, Paz too foreshortens history to compare Sor Juana's poetry with that of the 19th and 20th century. Hernández Araico describes Sor Juana as an "astute intellectual" who was able to express her identity as a "colonial female subject" in the "psychological and ideological features" of her theatrical production (xxiii). Kirk agrees with Poot Herrera's categorization of Sor Juana as "a fairground freak" and in tune with Josefina Ludmer's conclusions in her famous essay, "Las tretas del débil" ("Tricks of the weak"), she describes the nun as a marginalized individual who gained "access to public discourse in forms which are themselves marginal" (13). Clearly, Sor Juana's status as marginalized and visionary is not relinquished in any of these critics' work.

In summary, Juana Inés was born into a middle class family as a natural child and from her youth her social circle was comprised primarily of her *criollo* relatives and important members of the clergy and of the viceregal palace. In spite of these facts, much emphasis is very often unduly placed on the discussion of her purported inferior status as a woman born out of wedlock. In much critical discourse, her privileged status as a religious woman and as an educated *criolla* fades quickly and inconspicuously into the background. The explanation for this phenomenon lies in the fact that the critical discourse here examined has as its primary goal the facilitation of the direct reading, or the identification between the object and the

reader. Given that the *subject*/*artist*/*woman* struggling to express herself is the object that such criticism sets out to discover, it is not surprising when this precise object materializes in the pages of critical discourse. In turn, what is left out or deemed of little importance within such criticism is also revealing. The fact that Sor Juana was a member of a class who bought and sold slaves, for example, (and she did too), inevitably makes plenary identification with her a bit more challenging for the modern educated bourgeois subject. The disregard for such realities more or less guarantees flawed conclusions and always demonstrates the ideological bias of the criticism involved. In the arguments that follow, this discussion examines yet another way in which much of contemporary criticism demonstrates the tendency to distort historical categories and modernize Sor Juana's work, this time regarding the classification of her writing and her thinking as "secular".

2.3 The profanation of a sacralized ideology

One of the multiple ways in which Sor Juana is ahistorically constructed often involves the application of terms such as "intellectual" and "secular" to the nun. These terms are often used to describe Sor Juana, again with reference to her perceived status as a marginalized outsider whose writing represented an opposition to the status quo. In almost any contemporary introduction to her work, the reader will find Sor Juana described as Merrim indicates, as "an intellectual woman" dedicated to "the pursuit of learning" and dissident in both her defense of women and her insistence upon what are commonly regarded as her "inclinations toward secular knowledge" ("Toward" 17, 27). In Merrim's most recent project on Sor Juana, the introduction states that "She was extraordinarily well versed, vastly well read, in both religious and secular topics […] She wrote and published on secular themes as atypical for a nun as human love […]" (*Early* xi-xii). In similar fashion, Stavans states that "What makes Sor Juana stand out is her literary power, the subtlety of her subversion, and her pursuit of secular forms of knowledge" (xxi). Sabat de Rivers names Sor Juana's primary preoccupation as "la defensa que hace de su derecho a la intelectualidad" (11). Such descriptions have by now gained the status of common knowledge with reference to Sor Juana and are very rarely

contested. The significance of such statements should not, however, be underestimated as they represent a crucial portion of the standard introductory commentary necessary for the reproduction of the category of subjectivity in the literary analysis that generally follows. Sor Juana's portrayal as an *intellectual* invested in *secular pursuits* serves as yet another mechanism useful for foreshortening the distance between herself and the modern reader and presenting her as a phenomenon identifiable within the bourgeois ideological matrix. Given her historical moment she necessarily takes on the status of a forbearer of sorts within the context of orthodox criticism.

Proving Sor Juana's credentials as a bona fide intellectual and defender of secular pursuits, however, can often prove somewhat tricky given the fact that her textual production is contradictory in nature and does not actually conform predominantly to the logic of the bourgeois matrix. As established earlier in this argument, the assumption that she was ideologically very much *like us* generally requires that the critic perform a sleight of hand that involves making many assumptions about all the things that Sor Juana would have said if she only could have done so. A longer quote from Stavans' introduction provides us with a good example of the slippery kinds of arguments that result from the modernization of Sor Juana, in this case with specific reference to her supposed secular interests:

> While in her *Response to Sor Filotea* she articulated a clear defense of secularism, she was also careful not to become a dissident. […] Had she been more radical, less conciliatory, she could have proved a catalyst to reform and an invitation to secularism. But many factors impeded her. First and foremost is the fact that New Spain lacked a critical tradition. The Spanish-speaking Americas were not born in a struggle for liberalism and democracy. They inherited the Iberian philosophy of timidity and intolerance. Sor Juana challenged this philosophy, but ultimately gave up her struggle. (xvii)

As one reads the above quote the contradictions multiply and questions arise. How would it have been possible to write "a clear defense of secularism" within a still feudalizing and sacralized social system and not have been "a dissident"? If New Spain lacked a critical

tradition, where did Sor Juana's critique originate? How do critical traditions come to exist at all and why did Spain not have one, if this was in fact the case?

Perhaps unsurprisingly, what remains at the end of the passage in the way of an explanation for the case of Sor Juana is simply Sor Juana; in other words, once again, the only visible explanation for Sor Juana's "defense of secularism" is her own singular mind, capable of critique in spite of the weight of the pervasive "Iberian philosophy of timidity and intolerance." Although Stavans does seem to begin to engage the question of ideology in this passage, he ultimately locates the *subject/object* (Sor Juana) of his analysis outside, or at least on the margins, of the Iberian *philosophy* in question, thus giving the reader no clear picture of the structural relationship between a dominant philosophy (ideology?) and the individuals that are its bearers. On the other hand, perhaps the liberal understanding of the relationship between individuals and historical philosophies is in fact portrayed, although implicitly, very clearly here. In Stavans' account, it would appear that the individual is always free (at least theoretically) to reject or accept a given philosophy. Causality, in other words, is always finally reduced to the subject. From this perspective, Sor Juana is most often understood as an historical anomaly, and the failure, as noted by Stavans, to fully articulate her dissidence can be explained by her marginal status. For many critics, Sor Juana was a progressive, even secular thinker who was simply outnumbered by those who still adhered to a more conventional way of thinking. Accordingly, if her writing appears contradictory and not as transparently critical as the modern reader might hope, it was only because she had to protect herself from likely repercussions. The logic of subjectivity is palpable in such arguments and especially so in the repeated portrayal of the individual characterized by a transhistorical desire for freedom. Stavans' analysis of the situation abidingly obeys the logic of bourgeois ideology in its defense of the free subject (always longing to be freer) at the center of the text.

All of the critics mentioned above along with many others make reference to Sor Juana's intellectual status and secular pursuits regarding them as accepted historical facts. The figure of the modern organic intellectual (as social critic), however, did not appear on the horizon of history until the 18th century, appearing in conjunction with the full-fledged establishment of bourgeois relations; it is also worth noting that in the case of Spain, the

establishment of bourgeois relations is significantly delayed in comparison with other European nations, in particular the Protestant nations of the north. If Sor Juana can be understood as *an intellectual figure*, she can surely not be categorized as an intellectual according to the strictly bourgeois understanding of the term given the still very feudal terms of her existence. With respect to her purported secular pursuits, an equally suspicious amount of extrapolation is necessary in order to demonstrate "a clear defense of secularism" in Sor Juana. In their work on the colonial period in *Introducción al estudio de la literatura hispanoamericana*, Juan Carlos Rodríguez and Álvaro Salvador describe 17th century Hispanic America in a way that contrasts significantly with the description given above by Stavans. In the first place, unlike Stavans, Rodríguez and Salvador do not view individuals as the primary instance in the causal chain, but instead understand them as functioning according to real ideological limits established by the productive logic of the social system in play. In the case of 17th century New Spain, both textual production and the pursuit of letters have to be understood according to the logic of resurgent feudal relations and the renewed and redoubled sacralization that characterized the period of the transition:

> Ser <<letrado>> en pleno siglo XVII es casi como no ser nada. La vuelta al feudalismo que se produce con la Contrarreforma hace que la estructura social esté muy fijada desde el vulgo hasta la nobleza, y que ciertos <<empleos>> sociales, fruto de las contradicciones históricas no tengan lugar definido. La práctica de las letras, en sí mismas, la figura de lo que hoy podríamos llamar el intelectual, se ve en ese momento como una figura marginal y parasitaria. Se comprende la figura del letrado noble y, por supuesto, se consideran como intelectuales orgánicos a los eclesiásticos, a los religiosos, en una estructura social en donde se ha producido <<la traición de la burguesía>>, y la Inquisición ejerce de vigilante de una ideología nuevamente sacralizada en todas sus manifestaciones. (Rodríguez and Salvador, *Introducción* 46)

What is clear in the quote by Rodríguez and Salvador is that in Spain and her territories during the latter part of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, certain categories such as that of the *letrado* that had begun to function under early bourgeois relations became more or less obsolete under resurgent feudal relations or could now only be comprehended in

feudal/sacralizing terms. Whereas the *letrado* of earlier bourgeois relations was conceived of according to professional, i.e., more strictly contractual terms, this was no longer the case in Sor Juana's moment. Although writers like Sor Juana could and did often expect remuneration of some sort for their work, such exchanges were organized once again in a more strictly tributary fashion, comprehended ideologically as an expression of the relationship between Lords and servants rather than contractually. Accordingly, if Sor Juana understood herself to be an intellectual, she understood herself to be organically so, in other words, vocationally and not professionally so. From Sor Juana's perspective, her intellect and her scholarly inclinations were *natural* in her, *organic expressions* of her status as *criolla* and of her relationship to the palace and her place within the ecclesiastical hierarchy. As noted in Chapter One, her letter to the Bishop is full of descriptions referencing the organic nature of her intellect; she insists, for example, upon "la fuerza de mi vocación" and "esta mi negra inclinación que todo lo haya vencido". At every turn she emphasizes both the intensity of her inclination toward letters but also the God-given, otherwise organic, nature of her condition: "Bien se deja en esto conocer cuál es la fuerza de mi inclinación. Bendito sea Dios, que quiso fuese hacia las letras y no hacia otro vicio que fuera en mi casi insuperable" (*Woman* 44). [36]

In spite of resurgent feudal relations, however, the professional function of the *letrado* was not entirely eradicated. As the quote by Rodríguez and Salvador suggests, this figure continued to exist residually to a certain extent but was, in the context of the 17th century, recodified according to the logic of a dominant feudalizing ideology. A quote from Octavio Paz's *The Traps of Faith* is helpful for observing the particular contradictions in play. Although

[36] Peden's translation of this particular quote is worth examination here as it provides us with an another important example of the way in which the critical bias of bourgeois ideology makes its way into contemporary translations of texts like Sor Juana's. Peden's translation is as follows: "In this practice one may recognize the strength of my inclination. I give thanks to God, Who willed *that such an ungovernable force be turned toward letters and not to some other vice*" (emphasis added) (Peden, *Woman* 44). A better translation might read as follows: "In this, one may recognize the potency of my inclination. I give thanks to God, Who willed that it be toward letters and not to some other vice." Sor Juana's original text does not state that her inclination was an "ungovernable force" that had to be "turned toward letters" but rather implies that her inclination was always toward letters and God-given from the beginning. The translation by Peden reveals an ideological bias that subtly yet clearly reinforces the bourgeois construction of Sor Juana that emphasizes her individuality and even rebelliousness and portrays her intellect as having been bridled by her superiors. Ultimately, such distortions in the translation work toward the infusion of the logic of subjectivity and the erasure of the logic of substantialism that still characterizes the original text.

Paz is not here attempting to theorize regarding the contradictory nature of Sor Juana's writing, his statement condenses the contradiction quite nicely as it points to an overlap between writing understood as a professional activity and writing conceived of as service to one's lord. Speaking specifically about Sor Juana's poems to María Luisa Manrique de Lara, the viceroy's wife, Paz says: "they were the homage of a professional poet to the poet's lord" (*Traps* 201). *Professionals* and *servants of the Lord* are of course two contradictory categories pertaining to two distinct historical modes of production, and yet, to a certain degree, Sor Juana partook in each of these historical categories as she was both a poet who was often commissioned for her work as well as a faithful servant of the Church and the Palace whose work expressed the tributary logic of the feudal hierarchy. Although the fact of her being commissioned to write illustrates the reality of the residual professional/bureaucratic function that still marks the role of the 17th century poet (even under resurgent feudalism), Sor Juana's expressed defense of the exercise of her intellect and the pursuit of letters follows a predominantly organicist logic. Nowhere does she mount a defense of the *right* to intellectual pursuits according to the bourgeois notion of individual rights pertaining to the subject/intellectual. In spite of the fact that she depended upon the commissions she received for her writing, nowhere does she speak of the practice of letters according to the logic of professional pursuit, but rather, as we have already seen in the previous chapter, writing is always understood in terms of service. Over and again in *La Respuesta* she insists upon the fact that her compositions were created at the behest of a superior and offered in obedience.

It is important to continue recognizing that Sor Juana's writing displays the logic of two contradictory ideologies. The historical breach that opened with the eruption of bourgeois relations created the new distinction between public and private spheres and manifested itself at the level of the ideology in the perspectivism characteristic of animism. At the beginning of the transition, the eye of the individual began to supplant the eye of God and the invention of the free subject meant that individual/private truth began to oppose the feudal logic that had allowed for but one sacred Truth. As discussed in Chapter One, the pervasive perspectivism that characterizes Sor Juana's texts is the tell-tale sign in her work of the fact that strictly feudal relations have been compromised. At the same time, however, whenever Sor Juana is called

upon to explain or defend her actions, she does so according to a feudalizing logic expressed in terms of service. Although in Sor Juana's writing there is a strong "I" at the center of the text, the private truth of the individual does not challenge the sacred Truth that marks the feudal world. In reality, Sor Juana mounts her defense of women and her critique of certain of her superiors in the church hierarchy from within the logic of a feudalizing/scholastic/sacralizing ideology and not from without. And it is precisely this fact that so many contemporary critics fail to see when they claim to find evidence of a defense of secularism in Sor Juana.

In examining the critical work on Sor Juana over the years, one notices that general shifts in focus are accompanied by important shifts in terminology, one of these being a shift from a basic classification of each of her works as either *sacred* or *profane,* to their subsequent categorization according to the terms *religious* and *secular*. The shift in criticism from the employment of the terms *sacred* vs. *profane* to the preference for *religious* vs. *secular* works toward the erasure of historical contradiction and is indicative of the increasingly limited amount of emphasis placed upon the need to have a real understanding of the feudal period in order to comprehend the textual production of the transition. The terms *sacred* and *profane* were adhered to, for example, by Alfonso Méndez Plancarte whose 1950's edition of Sor Juana's complete works is still the standard version cited in much contemporary criticism, although many contemporary critics dismiss certain of Méndez Plancarte's critical opinions regarding them as conservative and antiquated, including his ratification of Sor Juana as a highly religious person and dedicated member of the church. In more recent criticism on Sor Juana's work, not only is the genuine quality of the nun's religiosity often doubted and even sometimes negated, but the terms *religious* and *secular* often replace and/or are used interchangeably with *sacred* and *profane.* Stephanie Merrim's publications, for example, utilize all four terms making no apparent distinction between the two binaries. This modification in the description of Sor Juana's work is evidence of the tendency of bourgeois criticism to read Sor Juana's texts according to its own ideological categories and their evolution while ignoring the true ideological extraction of the texts in question.

The terms *sacred* and *profane* as well as *secular* are terms which would have been familiar to Sor Juana herself and indeed, do appear in her work, but understanding these terms

according to their feudalizing logic is key for apprehending the relationship that Sor Juana's work has to what we understand today by *secularism*. The notion that Sor Juana's writing represents a struggle to subvert scholastic authority and pursue secular thinking is to a great degree inaccurate; although her texts do exhibit a perspectivist logic that has already broken to a certain degree with the feudal gloss, Sor Juana herself was incapable of theorizing her writing as an object that challenged the feudal, sacralized understanding of the world. *Sacred* and *profane* were both terms that within the feudal ideological matrix referred to a sacralized world, a world in which all was understood as existing under God's dominion and according to his will. In such a world, everything belonged to and made sense according to a thoroughly religious ideology, and there was essentially no division between things that could be understood according to God's laws and things that fell outside of this jurisdiction. The distance between that which was *sacred* and that which was *profane* was akin to the distance between *divine* and *human*, the distance between the sphere of *heaven* and that of *earth*, the relationship often understood to be like links in a chain traveling from the lowliest of realms to the lofty heights. The distance between the sacred and the profane was parallel to the distance between *corrupt* and *pure*, the distance between *the sinner* and *the altar*. Only certain members of a sacralized society were meant to have contact with the most sacred of places and objects, but everything in the world was circumscribed according to its relationship to the sacred. The feudal world was characterized by the co-existence of parallel hierarchies (dominated by the church and the nobility) each having jurisdiction over distinct kinds of matters (sacred and profane), but all was understood as part of a divinely inspired creation. No realm existed where religious meaning was excluded; there existed both sacred and profane texts, but no text could be totally separated from the Biblical text in that every text could be measured or judged in terms of its fidelity to the Truth of the Biblical text.

Since the teachings of St. Thomas of Aquinas had become part of the accepted canon, a new emphasis was placed upon the validity of sensory experiences. Theology and philosophy in turn came to be understood as distinct pursuits: "theology dealt with revelation, philosophy with natural experience" (Leff 208). Sensory knowledge of the natural world was the place where understanding began, and a scholar could very well begin with philosophy and

eventually graduate to theology. Another important change was the role that reason would take within Aquinas's Aristotelian interpretation of reality. As historian Ellen Meiksins Wood observes:

> The 'naturalization' of man, virtue, justice and the 'political' community in the manner of Aquinas is a major departure from earlier Christian doctrines, and in this respect he differs substantially from Augustine. Aquinas's account of life in this world is very different from his great predecessor's treatment of human history in this sinful earthly existence. For Aquinas history is not just a tragic spectacle, in which no harmony, no just or rightful order, can prevail: […] This is not to say that the Fall and sin have no bearing on Aquinas's theology, but […] The Fall has not meant the loss of natural reason; and, while human beings are capable of choosing not to follow the principles of reason, their distinctive rational capacities allow them to understand and follow natural law. They can achieve happiness or fulfillment (*beatitudo*) in this world by living in accordance with the principles of reason and morality. (206-7)

Some four hundred years after Aquinas, Sor Juana's own writing also defends the Aristotelian idea as it appeared in Aquinas that "human beings are uniquely endowed with reason" (Meiksins Wood 206). Sor Juana defends the human capacity for reason (in particular the rational capacity of women) and continues to echo her Church forefather describing a hierarchical relationship between philosophical and theological pursuits referencing theology as the Queen of the Sciences (*Woman* 33-7). What is important to understand here is that in both Aquinas and Sor Juana, even though reason was granted the role of deciphering the natural world and one could even dedicate oneself exclusively to the pursuit of the natural (or more profane) sciences, there was still no philosophy, *no science*, that existed outside of the bounds of religion. Such a science was simply inconceivable in these texts. In accordance with Meiksins Wood's above quote, medieval historian Gordon Leff also remarks with respect to Aquinas: "The foundation of Thomism was that reason supplemented faith, not denied it" (212). In spite of the important distinction between faith and reason, between profane and sacred pursuits, knowledge was understood as ascending from sensory experience toward illumination.

Reason, far from the role it would play during the Enlightenment and beyond, was still "directed at proving the truth of revelation" (212).

The fact that Sor Juana's writing so often moves from a literal observation into a substantialist interpretation is helpful for understanding the category of reason as it was produced in a still heavily sacralized ideology. Just as in *La Respuesta* Sor Juana defends her method of study as one that begins with observation of the most mundane—the eggs in the kitchen, for example—and moves gradually toward theology, in *Primer Sueño* she again describes the process of acquiring knowledge as one that begins at the bottom of a ladder and ascends from the particular to the universal, from the inanimate to the animate and finally to the spiritual realm. At the beginning of the following passage, reason dictates that the path to understanding begins by focusing on one theme at a time:

> más juzgó conveniente
> a singular asunto reducirse,
> o separadamente
> una por una discurrir las cosas
> que vienen a ceñirse
> en las que artificiosas
> dos veces cinco son Categorías:
> […]
> hacienda escala, de un concepto
> en otro va ascendiendo grado a grado,
> y el de comprender orden relativo
> sigue, necesitado
> del entendimiento
> limitado vigor, que a sucesivo
> discurso fía su aprovechamiento:
> cuyas débiles fuerzas, la doctrina
> con doctos alimentos va esforzando,
> y el prolijo, si blando,

continuo discurso de la disciplina,
robustos le va aliento infundiendo,
[…]
De esta serie seguir mi entendimiento,
el método quería,
o del ínfimo grado
del sér inanimado
[…]
pasar a la más noble jerarquía
[…]
y —ésta ya investigada
[…]
de este corporal conocimiento
haciendo, bien que escaso, fundamento,
al supremo pasar maravilloso
compuesto triplicado,
de tres acordes líneas ordenando
y de las formas todas inferiores
compendio misterioso. ("Sueño" 108-112)

At this point the narrative voice has moved from observation of minerals, then plants, to man, and man is described as the "visagra" or the articulation between Heaven and Earth, between the temporal and the eternal.

To imbue Sor Juana with a conscious desire for secular knowledge according to the bourgeois understanding of this term, or, to envision Sor Juana as a person who desired to operate *outside* the realm of the sacred or religious, is to misunderstand her and the contradictions of her texts completely. While there is a certain distinction in Sor Juana's textual production between *sacred* and *profane* works, her understanding of the world remains wholly sacralized. To be sure, there is a distinction to be made between a *villancico* or an *auto sacramental* written as part of a liturgy and a *comedia* intended for a performance at the

viceregal palace. While the *auto* formed part of a sacred ceremony in the sacred space represented by the Church, the *comedia* had the more profane function of providing entertainment. Although the first represented a more sacred and the second a more profane text, both of these examples continued to adhere to the feudalizing and sacralizing notion of the world during the period in question in that both faithfully reproduced the category of the servant. In the *auto* the servant is portrayed in relationship with his heavenly Lord, while in the transitional *comedia* it is the relationship between earthly lords and servants that is staged. Méndez Plancarte recognized the overarching sacralized worldview present in Sor Juana's work and perceived the risk involved in isolating and focusing only upon Sor Juana's profane texts. The following quote is from his introduction to *Volume II, Villancicos y Letras Sacras*, of his edition of Sor Juana's complete works:

> Aunque ya entre su Lírica Personal nos deparó Sor Juana preciosos especímenes de Sonetos, Romances, y otros poemas Sacro, y aun en el propio *Sueño*, una cumbe elévase hasta el doble misterio de la Unión Hipostática y del plan Cristocéntrico de la Creación, prevalecían allá—de todas suertes—los motivos profanos, con una perspectiva unilateral, muy fácilmente deformadora.
>
> Otra buena mitad—igual o "mayor", en cantidad como en calidad—es la que, al resultar inevitable el partir su Lírica en dos volúmenes, hubo de reservarse para el presente, y a la que da unidad su común destino de prestarle voz armoniosa a nuestro unánime pueblo congregado en religiosas solemnidades, iluminando así, ya en su medida cabal y auténtica, el ámbito vital de lo divino en la Nueva España del XVII, y desde luego—es claro—en su Flor más alta .(vii)

Méndez Plancarte categorizes some of Sor Juana's texts as more profane than sacred but never suggests that any of them stray from a wholly sacralized understanding of the world. Additionally, he is quick to say that to focus only on the more profane texts is to misunderstand Sor Juana, a statement that foreshadowed the path that criticism was bound to take with respect to Sor Juana's writing. Méndez Plancarte insists, unlike more contemporary critics, upon the *authenticity of sentiment* embodied in Sor Juana's liturgical sacred production. While Méndez Plancarte's reading of Sor Juana doubtless attempts to assign the nun a saintly role in

Church history, a reading that is also partial and in this sense perhaps just as politically oriented as the readings generated by a contemporary criticism that would understand Sor Juana as a subversive, even rebellious nun. If Méndez Plancarte's reading does distort Sor Juana to a degree, he is clearly less likely to distort her life and works by modernizing them. In contrast to more recent interpretations of Juana Inés, it could even be suggested that Méndez Plancarte, in keeping with his own vocation as a Catholic priest, displays a distinct preference for the more feudalizing, for the servant rather than for the subject, in Sor Juana[37].

[37] Lisa Vollendorf is one scholar who in fact does identify the problem with attempting to distinguish between religious and secular writing during the early modern period. Referring specifically to works produced by nuns, she states in her history on the women of inquisitorial Spain that:

> The variability of convent literature confirms that we cannot think only in terms of a secular versus religious division for the early modern world. As evidenced by the treatment of themes such as motherhood and marriage in myriad texts by women, no strict divisions between secular and religious writers exited in the period. (Vollendorf 95)

Although Vollendorf does recognize an important problem here, the aim of her text on the whole remains rooted in the same intent to discover the ways in which women of the early modern period can be shown to hold and defend the values of the modern bourgeois subject. In the end, she fails to distinguish between the feudal and modern understandings of the terms *secular* and *religious*, ultimately identifying *secular* with *humanist* pursuits. Like the scholars mentioned above, it will be her task to prove that even in spite of their overtly religious trappings, many texts from the early modern period do in fact contain secular kernels. The following quote rehearses some of the same arguments typical of the normative criticism examined above:

> With the exceptions of texts by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Saint Teresa, Hispanic religious women's writing often has been ignored. This lack of attention can be attributed to the problem of access to texts and the tendency among those of us trained as secular humanists to shy away from religious topics. Faced with a limited number of texts produced by secular women and with the fact that convents housed the highest concentrations of educated women in pre-nineteenth-century Spain, scholars have begun to incorporate the convent into their gestalt of early modern women's lives. Piety, sanctity, religious practice, and spirituality lie at the center of many religious women's texts. *Hagiography and other genres cultivated by religious men and women rely on formulae that give the texts the appearance of homogeneity and predictability*. Hagiographic texts, which sought to legitimize spirituality by invoking saints' lives and biblical models, provide an excellent example of the realities of the period: Religious experience required careful explanation to avoid raising the specter of inquisitorial censure (emphasis added). (Vollendorf 95)

This quote makes it clear that even though Vollendorf recognizes that the texts of the early modern period cannot be easily classified as strictly religious or secular, her definition of these terms is still a modern one and limits her ability to comprehend the logic of sacralization still characteristic of the period. Just like the critics mentioned above, Vollendorf will attempt to salvage religious texts for the modern reader by pointing out that they only "give the appearance of homogeneity and predictability" because of their formulaic production; modern texts are assumed to be less formulaic given the fact that individual authors are now freer to express themselves than they would have been in earlier moments. The feudal logic of the hagiography that reproduces the category of the servant is lost as the historian attempts to extract trace evidence of a subject/author in the text. Once again, at the end of the passage, the sheer religiosity of the texts in question is contemplated as a mask that serves to protect the author from oppressive external forces; in this way the potential for a more secular intent behind what is interpreted as an overly religious artifice is preserved.

Not unlike the term *profane*, the term *secular* did not mean for Sor Juana or her contemporaries what it means today. Although *secular* did indicate a certain degree of separation from certain religious affairs, this did not imply a strict ideological separation between religious and non-religious spheres in society. For Sor Juana and her contemporaries, the term *secular* had much in common with the term *profane* and referred to that which was *worldly*, *mundane* or *temporal*. Life itself was understood as dual in the sense that it was characterized by both a temporal and an eternal aspect with death representing the passage between the two. It is important to understand, however, that the temporal aspect was subordinate to the eternal; time was still more eschatological than linear and all that was temporal would eventually be subsumed by eternal realities. *Secular* referenced the *siglo;* to categorize a matter as secular was to indicate that it belonged to the temporal world or to a specific worldly age. Secular or temporal matters were distinct from sacred and eternal ones that existed outside of earthly time.

Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, in his book *Las clases privilegiadas de la España del Antiguo Régimen*, describes the life of two classes of clergy, the *secular clergy* and the *regular clergy*. Members of the *secular clergy* lived outside of religious orders and their duties included serving among the general populace, in other words, *in the siglo* or *in the world.* The obligations of the secular clergy could include tasks such as: saying mass, administering the sacraments, marriage, baptism and burial, collecting tithes, mediating conflicts, teaching children to read and write, even cultivating crops on occasion (*Clases* 260, 261). According to Domínguez Ortiz, while certain members of the urban secular clergy might be required to dedicate the majority of their time to bureaucratic obligations, the rural secular clergy most often had daily direct contact with parishioners:

> El cura era el consejero natural de los aldeanos, su compañero de caza, de tertulia y otras recreaciones honestas; el hombre que por su carácter sacerdotal y su cultura, podía instruirlos, representarlos, defenderlos contra los abusos de las autoridades. Pero era también quien podía multarlos por no acudir a la misa dominical o excomulgarlos si no diezmaban. (262-3)

In this way, secular clergy were charged with caring for more temporal matters associated with the daily life of the faithful while *Regular clergy* (who followed a *regla)* were cloistered members of the ecclesiastical establishment (living outside of the world) who belonged to a specific order and were dedicated to matters more sacred such as the study and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. The monastic life of the regular clergy was less diverse, each autonomous order distinguished by its particular established ritual (273). Domínguez Ortiz describes life in the Benedictine monasteries in the following manner: "la existencia monástica se deslizaba dentro de un clima monótono, sereno y apacible" (294). Activities of the regular clergy, again depending upon the specific *regla* followed by the order, could include: saying mass, recitation of prayers, study and composition, fasting, abstaining from certain activities according to their ritual, observing silence, internal governance, and overseeing and/or participating in the cultivation of crops on monastery grounds (294-5, 305, 314). Domínguez Ortiz also explains that the intellectual activity of the convent or monastery was often dedicated to further developing doctrines and defending the correctness of the theological nuances of the order (319-20).

Although the secular clergy was more associated with *extramuros* affairs and the regular clergy with the *intramuros* world of monastic life, the degree of cloistering was highly variable as is apparent throughout Domínguez Ortiz's discussion of the clergy. The following quote from Lisa Vollendorf's book, *The Lives of Women: A New History of Inquisitional Spain,* also describes the general state of affairs with respect to convent life explaining that in many cases a cloistered nun, i.e., a member of the regular clergy, was not entirely cloistered:

> Not all women were obligated to take vows. For many, living in a convent did not preclude them from receiving visitors. Regulations increased as a result of the post-Tridentine insistence on the cloistering of nuns. Nonetheless, only the reformed orders wanted their nuns to live wholly cut off from their previous, secular lives, declaring such women 'dead to the world' (*muertas al siglo*). (94)

Although Sor Juana's confessor, Núñez de Miranda, did advocate for the full cloister of nuns, Sor Juana herself chose a convent that did not follow such a strict regimen. At the same time, however, she identified convent life with contemplation and study of the scriptures as well as

other texts. She says about herself, for example, "que siendo monja y no seglar debía, por el estado eclesiástico, profesar letras" (*Woman* 33).[38]

Sor Juana's writing can effectively be divided into texts that treat profane and/or sacred matters. Her comedies are examples of *profane* or *secular* works concerned with more temporal matters such as marriage and the restoration of honor while her sacramental pieces (including the *autos*, *loas* and *villancicos*, etc.) engage eternal themes such as salvation and the attributes of Christ, Mary, etc.[39]. The crucial point here is that none of Sor Juana's texts can be considered "secular" according to our modern usage of the term to designate that which is not associated with religion or religious matters. In 17th century New Spain one can really not speak of an *outside* to religion. Contemporary Sor Juana scholars who describe the nun as having participated in both secular and religious writing understand these terms according to their present day oppositional definitions, definitions that obey the logic of the public/private split that characterizes modern bourgeois society but that did not characterize the feudal world.

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[38] Once more it seems that Peden's translation of Sor Juana's text into English demonstrates a certain ideological bias not present in the original. Peden's version interprets Sor Juana to be implying that she was not necessarily originally interested in learning as part of an ecclesiastical practice, although she was ultimately obligated to structure her learning in this fashion. Peden's version of the above quote reads as follows: "and being a nun and not a layperson, it was seemly that I profess my vows to learning through ecclesiastical channels" (Peden, *Woman* 32-3). Peden's translation makes it sound like Sor Juana was first an intellectual who then became a nun and was subsequently obligated to conduct studies of the ecclesiastical kind. In the original Spanish, however, it is clear that Sor Juana is equating the vocation of nun with the practice of letters. A better translation might read: "and being a nun and not a layperson, it was seemly that I dedicate myself to letters." These are organically connected in the original text; the fact that Sor Juana was a member of the clergy was posited as evidence of her intellectual nature. As Rodríguez states, the clergy were organic intellectuals in the feudal system. One category ratifies and reinforces the other in Sor Juana's text, whereas in the translation, the nun is depicted as merely having done what was expected of her by writing on sacred themes, in other words, as having obeyed a societal norm rather than as having obeyed her nature.

[39] It is interesting to note that a great number of Sor Juana's *villancicos* present Christ and Mary as figures who bridge the gap between the sacred and the profane in that both participate in temporal life in their human aspect as well as in the eternal in their divine aspect. In a series of villancicos on the Virgin, to give but just a few examples, Sor Juana describes Mary as:

> coronada de blasones
> y de hazañas que la ilustran,
> por no caber ya en la tierra,
> del mundo se nos afufa. ("Villancico 222" 10)

And then again in "Villancico 226":

> fué el caso muy para ver
> en Santa María de Gracia.
> Si es Puerta en quien se hallará
> franca la entrada del Cielo. ("Villancico 226" 19)

In number 227 she is described as "Reina de tierra y Cielo" ("Villancico 227" 20). And in number 229: "aunque de la tierra nace, nada de la tierra toque" ("Villancico 229" 23).

Although the public/private split was becoming established and did in fact have important repercussions in Sor Juana's life and work as we shall see throughout the rest of this discussion, the impact of this split must be gauged very carefully given the fact that the moment in question was characterized by a dominant feudal ideology working to combat the imposition of bourgeois logic.

Because the bourgeois matrix is hard pressed to think outside of the logic of the public/private split, religion is always inflected in such arguments with the logic of the private; for bourgeois ideology, religion is a private matter. But this was simply not the case under feudal relations or during the transition. The fact that the sacralized nature of the feudal world was disrupted by the advent of bourgeois relations and the invention of the public/private split is certain. Protestantism arose as a religious form that operated according to the productive logic of bourgeois relations, functioning according to the logic of the new public/private split in that religion and faith began to be understood as private matters to be resolved at least in part at the level of the individual believer; private citizens would ever-increasingly hold private religious beliefs that needed less ratification at the level of the public and increasingly secular (now understood as *non-religious*) sphere. Catholicism, on the other hand, reacted during the Counter-Reformation period with a redoubled effort to suture the public/private split (as well as the religious/secular split) that was contrary to its feudal productive logic. As Rodríguez explains, in Spain, the Inquisition represented an attempt, contradictory in itself, to restore feudal logic to the system. The Inquisition was contradictory precisely because it both reproduced *and* worked against the new logic of the public/private split; according to Rodríguez, it was "a feudal apparatus *adapted* to new, 'public' molds" (*Theory* 49). At the same time, it was this same institution that worked most vigorously toward both the erasure of the new public/private split and the resacralization of the world and everything in it:

> In Spain, by way of contrast, the strategy of unity tries to "ignore" the private/public dichotomy, tries to recuperate the feudal "unity" (*a unique field traversed by sacred elements and others relating to lineage*). This tactic explains why the Inquisition, an instrument now destined for state control of the public realm, conceives of itself not in "universal" terms, as the persecutor of heresy and of religious evil in general, as under

> feudalism, but as the guarantor of the "public" ("national") unity. […] The activity of the Inquisition, between 1480 and 1516, is best understood as part of the policy of "sacralizing" centralization. […] and in particular against the non-sacralization that bourgeois relations entail. (50-1)

One of the problems associated with the critical discourse examined in this chapter is the absence of an effort to historicize the public/private split. Instead of examining Sor Juana's texts with the above mentioned contradictory forces in mind, much of contemporary criticism simply assumes that the public/private split operated then as it does now, and especially so at the level of the individual. The inability to think outside of the category of the subject results in the discovery of a private and secular Sor Juana. Imagining Sor Juana as a subject complete with a rich interior/private life, such criticism then attempts to discover whether the nun truly identified more with religious or secular thinking, each of these representing distinct possibilities for personal and private convictions. As we have seen, the preference is to suggest that Sor Juana, although stifled by the religious conservatism of her moment, was more genuinely interested in secular intellectual pursuits, religion serving as a necessary mask. The gradual substitution in critical discussions of Sor Juana's work of the words *sacred* and *profane* with the *religious/secular* binary is indicative of a critical discourse that envisions Sor Juana as having had access to a space outside of religion, i.e., outside of the sacred, and it is from this private, intellectual and *secular* space that the Sor Juana of much of contemporary criticism is able to produce subversive, yet craftily veiled, critiques of men, patriarchy, the religious establishment, etc. In this kind of critical discourse Sor Juana is situated almost totally outside of her moment, and the reading process often becomes fixated on deciphering hidden meanings, but not because of the oft mentioned baroque penchant for camouflaging meaning, but because a pre-modern subject, a proto-feminist, is purported to be lurking just beneath the surface of the text. In spite of the fact that historical data and contextual information are abundant in many of the critical works here discussed, this information serves almost as a sort of anachronistic backdrop in front of which contemporary criticism will tell a very contemporary story. Sor Juana's inner world is revealed (or invented), her subversive meanings are made clear and her work is made very relevant to present day issues. In this process, however, the

relevance of history is lost.

The last few paragraphs describe one of the processes by which bourgeois criticism answers the questions it poses with respect to Sor Juana and in doing so modernizes her and her texts completely. The questions that need to be answered if the historicity of her texts is to be preserved, however, are other. For example, to what degree did Sor Juana's work participate in the production of the public/private split and conversely, to what degree did her writing participate in the feudalizing/sacralizing attempt to suture this split? If we reject the claim popular in normative criticism that some of Sor Juana's superiors in the Church took issue with her writing because she defended *secular* intellectual pursuits, (*secular* understood here according to its modern meaning) how can we explain the complaints that certain of Sor Juana's superiors in the church leveled against her? And how then can we explain the logic of Sor Juana's response to the Bishop's chastising her for not dedicating her writing more fully to sacred matters? What kind of defense was she writing if it wasn't, as much of contemporary scholarship would have it, a veiled defense of secularism?

Once Sor Juana entered the more sacred space of the cloister, even in spite of the fact that the majority of her writing was on sacred themes designated for liturgical purposes, her confessor, Núñez de Miranda, became increasingly frustrated with the fact that the nun retained her tight connection to the viceregal palace and continued to participate in the affairs of the temporal world in her correspondence with the palace and her continued acceptance of commissions for more profane pieces such as her cape and sword comedies. Given her status as a member of the Regular clergy (women were not members of the Secular clergy), both Núñez de Miranda and later the Bishop of Puebla admonished Sor Juana by critiquing her for dedicating too much of her writing and time to temporal or *extramuros* matters. Chapter Four will examine in further detail the largely gender-based logic of the attack on Sor Juana. At this point, however, it is important to see that the critique of Sor Juana by her superiors was framed according to the logic of the sacred/profane binary as understood by a feudalizing ideology. As a member of the regular and cloistered clergy Sor Juana could be expected to dedicate herself fully to sacred matters. Her defense of her writing in *La Respuesta* clearly conveys her understanding of the terms *sacred* and *profane* according to a feudalizing/sacralizing logic.

Early in her letter Sor Juana acknowledges the fact that she has been criticized for writing too much about "asuntos humanos" (*Woman* 22-23). Her defense of her actions at this conjuncture is to underscore her humility before the sacred scriptures:

> recibo en mi alma vuestra santísima amonestación de aplicar el estudio a Libros Sagrados, […] Y hablando con más especialidad os confieso, […] que el no haber escrito mucho de asuntos sagrados no ha sido desafición, ni de aplicación la falta, sino sobra de temor y reverencia debida a aquellas Sagradas Letras, para cuya inteligencia yo me conozco tan incapaz y para cuyo manejo soy tan indigna; (23)

And in the following passage, Sor Juana again makes clear that to undertake to study the scriptures requires a vast amount of previously acquired knowledge:

> Y así hay tanto comento de Virgilio y de Homero y de todos los poetas y oradores. Pues fuera de esto, ¿qué dificultades no se hallan en los lugares sagrados, aun en lo gramatical, de ponerse el plural por singular, de pasar de segunda a tercera persona, como aquello de los Cantares: *osculetur me osculo oris sui: quia meliora sunt ubera tua vino?* Aquel poner los adjetivos en genitivo, en vez de acusativo, como *Calicem salutaris accipiam?* Aquel poner el femenino por masculino; y, al contrario, llamar adulterio a cualquier pecado?
>
> Todo esto pide más lección de lo que piensan algunos que, de meros gramáticos, o cuando mucho con cuatro términos de Súmulas, quieren interpretar las Escrituras. ("Respuesta" 467)

Not only does Sor Juana defend writing about temporal matters as an expression of her humility before the sacred scriptures, she also goes on to reassert the inevitable and intimate connection between the temporal and the eternal, between the profane and the sacred, in this way defending the idea that to write about the temporal is also to write about the eternal. While the case can certainly be made that Sor Juana's arguments are very skillfully crafted, in them there is no defense of *the secular* that would separate it from *the religious*. For Sor Juana, to write about earthly matters is also to write about heavenly ones as these are ultimately always connected:

> el fin a que esperaba era a estudiar Teología […] Con esto proseguí, dirigiendo siempre, como he dicho, los pasos de mi estudio a la cumbre de la Sagrada Teología; pareciéndome preciso, para llegar a ella, subir por los escalones de las ciencias y artes humanas; porque ¿cómo entenderá el estilo de la Reina de las Ciencias quien aún no sabe el de las ancilas? ¿Cómo sin Lógica sabría yo los métodos generales y particulares con que está escrita la Sagrada Escritura? […] Y en fin, ¿cómo el Libro que comprende todos los libros, y la Ciencia en que se incluyen todas las ciencias, para cuya inteligencia todas sirven? Y después de saberlas todas […] pide otra circunstancia más que todo lo dicho, que es una continua oración y pureza de vida. (*Woman* 33-37)

Sor Juana is here clearly discussing science in scholastic terms; just as feudal society was organized hierarchically, so was its science, with Theology situated as the Queen of the Sciences and the rest functioning as her obedient servants. According to this formulation, to study the profane was to study the sacred in that all was inscribed in divine creation. Nothing could be considered separate from the total sacralized organic body. Sor Juana defends the study of diverse matters given that all of these are connected by "ocultos engarces" in the great "cadena universal" created by God (38-9):

> Es la cadena que fingieron los antiguos que salía de la boca de Júpiter, de donde pendían todas las cosas eslabonadas unas con otras. […] Todas las cosas salen de Dios, que es el centro a un tiempo y la circunferencia de donde salen y donde paren todas las líneas creadas. (40-1)

In spite of the fact that Sor Juana clearly defines science according to a still significantly feudalizing and hierarchical logic, the above passage in *La Respuesta* that mentions and defends the importance of the study of Logic, Physics, Arithmetic, Geometry, and Architecture is still often mistaken as an early example of the defense of empiricism and secular studies. This is often the conclusion of normative bourgeois criticism even though all the specific examples given by Sor Juana of the fruits of scientific endeavor are highly allegorical and ultimately predicated more upon interpretation or revelation rather than upon literal observations. The following quote is but one of many similar examples where an allegorical reading is presented as synonymous with *science* in Sor Juana's work.

> Pues sin ser muy perito en la Música, ¿cómo se entenderán aquellas proporciones musicales y sus primores que hay en tantos lugares, especialmente en aquellas peticiones que hizo a Dios Abraham, por las Ciudades, de que si perdonaría habiendo cincuenta justos, y de este número bajó a cuarenta y cinco, que es sesquinona y es como de mi a re; de aquí a cuarenta, que es sesquiocsesquitercia, que es la del diatesarón; de aquí a veinte, que es la proporción sesquiáltera, que es la del diapente; de aquí a diez, que es la dupla, que es el diapasón; y como no hay más proporciones armónicas no pasó de ahí? Pues ¿cómo se podrá entender esto sin Música? (37)

In this passage, Sor Juana demonstrates how an understanding of the science of Music is helpful for revealing certain of the hidden links that characterize God's harmonious creation. According to Sor Juana, the study of diverse sciences leads to a better ability to *read* the signs inscribed in the book of nature and in the biblical text. Thus, the reason that Abraham could not and did not ask for God to spare Sodom and Gomorra for less than ten men was because it would not have obeyed the laws of harmonic proportion that characterize creation. Although the notion of a direct relationship between the eye and the thing had already been initiated with the impact of animism, the kind of observation Sor Juana advocated was still not empirical given that the conclusions the observer makes regarding the object observed still submit to a spiritualized and theological interpretation. At the same time, however, *seeing* in Sor Juana is always a mixture of *the literal eye* capable of describing an experience from the perspective of the individual and *the spiritual eye* that reads or explains what has been seen according to scholastic norms. Her text is, in this sense, utterly contradictory. Although the literal eye along with linear time and first person perspective do characterize Sor Juana's writing, it is not the literal eye of perspectivism that Sor Juana most often defends at the conscious level in the text. Note again for example, Sor Juana's conclusion that the most important factor for understanding is a state of "uninterrupted prayer and purity of life" (36); in other words, preparing oneself for study is a spiritual endeavor and one must take care to keep one's spiritual eyes clear. Here her work echoes the primacy of faith upheld in the basic tenets of the Augustinian tradition. When Sor Juana is compelled to explain how the sciences best achieve their goals, her rationale is of scholastic extraction; the most important kind of seeing is not

literal sight.

The following quote and the final example for this portion of our discussion is part of the nun's concluding arguments in the section of *La Respuesta* where she again attempts to demonstrate that to study and write about the profane is to take part in the sacred. Not only is this statement an intelligent self-defense for a nun who wrote on sacred and profane themes, but it is also an example of the way in which Sor Juana's work consistently participates in the suturing of the contradiction between the two ideological matrices that defined her moment. In general, the direction of her arguments reveals the dominance of the substantialist matrix and the tendency during the period to bring notions secreted by the bourgeois matrix into line with feudalizing ideology. This particular quote is especially contradictory, for it simultaneously defends the contradictory logics of feudal and bourgeois writing all the while bringing them both into the service of the Truth:

> yo de mí puedo asegurar que lo que no entiendo en un autor de una facultad lo suelo entender en otro de otra que parece muy distante […] y que la oración del lógico anda como línea recta, por el camino más breve, y la del retórico se mueve, como la corva, por el más largo, *pero van a un mismo punto los dos*; y cuando dicen que los expositores son como la mano abierta y los escolásticos como el puño cerrado. Y así no es disculpa, ni por tal la doy, el haber estudiado diversas cosas, pues éstas antes se ayudan. (41)

Sor Juana's comparisons of the logician and the rhetorician and of the exegete and the scholastic parallel her ongoing description of the relationship between profane and sacred studies, and she concludes, significantly, that in each case, what appear to be oppositional strategies lead paradoxically to the same end. With respect to the very divergent kinds of writing that marked her period, Sor Juana was ready to accept that both the opaque and allegorical feudal form as well as the plain writing (the naked idea) that had emerged with animist ideology could be used as vehicles for the expression of truth. To a certain degree, Sor Juana accepts both the reading of the signs characteristic of substantialism as well as the observations made by the literal eye that will characterize bourgeois relations. She brings these both together in the same way that she unites all the sciences under one Queen of Science, Theology—by simply insisting upon the idea that both kinds of study/writing are ultimately

travelling in the same direction. Because they both aim at discovering truth, because this is their shared nature, they both end up in the same place. In the end, she still understands all books as being essentially about the same thing, i.e., God's creation; even in spite of the fact that she herself is already producing texts that evidence certain ruptures with a strictly substantialist logic, Sor Juana still defines books (any form of writing/scripture) according to the substantialist definition of Biblical gloss. Every true book and every true science, as different as they may be from one another, share the same root in that each somehow points to Truth/God. This is but one example of the way in which her work continuously sutures (at the unconscious level) the contradiction between the two contradictory ideologies that characterized her moment.

To a certain degree, contemporary criticism has recognized the fundamental contradiction between the servant and the proto-subject in the text, or perhaps it could be better described as having *misrecognized* this fundamental contradiction in the text. The misrecognition that takes place is always predicated upon the logic of subjectivity that posits the subject as the prime causal factor and tends to raise contradiction to the conscious level. Such criticism views Sor Juana as one who perfectly comprehended the contradictions of her moment and left us with a cleverly veiled and subversive commentary that echoes the modern notion and defense of freedom, a critical situation that Read describes as a sort of "political voluntarism that, by collapsing the base into the superstructure, regresses to the liberal view of history as the 'story of liberty'" (Read, *Latin* 11). From this perspective, most of the above included quotes from Sor Juana's *Respuesta* are interpreted as part of the mask she constructs to protect herself from persecution by religious authorities. These passages are not to be taken at face value as representative of Sor Juana's real understanding of the sciences, and this critical perspective views Sor Juana as truly interested in secular pursuits but unable to fully realize herself intellectually given her historical circumstances. Her letter to the Bishop becomes a document that the critic must sift through in order to extract the trace bits of evidence that point to Sor Juana's underlying defense of secularism/individual freedom—all that might be classified as feudal (the preferred term usually being *medieval*) is merely residual and/or a form of insurance against inquisitorial prosecution. From the theoretical perspective informing the

present argument, leaving aside for a moment the issue of what is conscious and what is not, it appears that normative criticism has things backwards. *Feudal ideology is not residual in Sor Juana, but rather, fundamental*; substantialism is basic in her textual production, and what is only beginning to erupt in the text is the emerging subject of bourgeois relations. Although Sor Juana does indeed evince some of the traits that accompany the notion of subjectivity, it does not follow that her demonstration of identification with the category of the servant is mere pretense.

It is of course worthwhile to work out to a certain degree what was taking place at the conscious and unconscious levels in Sor Juana's texts, especially given the fact that much of the criticism we have been discussing tends to elevate unconscious ideological processes to the conscious level. As discussed, Rodríguez's work focuses on the unconscious level and privileges the notion of *the ideological unconscious* within the causal equation. Read describes the theoretical situation in the following manner: "The point, Rodríguez believes, cannot be emphasized enough: in the last instance it is not the experience of individual agents that counts as much as the relevant ideological unconscious, operative on an ontological level that transcends that of the individual" (*Latin* 10). In the case of Sor Juana, it is important to comprehend that there are always two ideologies battling for dominance at the level of the ideological unconscious, and yet, this historical battle was not a reality that Sor Juana was aware of. This being said, the fact that the production of certain notions or key categories occurs at the unconscious level doesn't mean that the ideological product remains always unconscious of these notions; in other words, basic ideological notions aren't unconscious. What remains unconscious is the productive mechanism of the discourse, or the real relations of exploitation. At the same time, the key categories secreted at the ideological level of a system of production *do* become the key categories by which individuals comprehend themselves. According to these key categories, individuals are inscribed within a given system and able to interpolate one another. At a moment characterized by a dominant feudalizing ideology, Sor Juana identified strongly with and indeed consciously understood herself and the world she lived in according to the key categories segregated by the substantialist ideological matrix. She was interpolated by her superiors as a servant and her letters negotiate what it meant to be a servant according to

the contradictory logic of the transition that marked the 17th century. The notion of the subject had not yet been historically constituted in the context of New Spain as an idea that could be defended at a conscious level. In other words, to ask how Sor Juana herself perceived her actions and how we are to understand them historically are two separate questions. Chapter Three considers some of the new notions that Sor Juana did in fact incorporate and contemplate at the conscious level in her text including: the public/private split, the notion of individual merit and the new ways of understanding the organic social hierarchy that were evolving.

2.4 Was Sor Juana a poet? Problematizing the reading of Octavio Paz

It is almlost impossible to write about Sor Juana without pausing at some point to consider the work of Octavio Paz, and in particular his now famous tome, *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, o, las trampas de la fe* (*Sor Juana: Or, the Traps of Faith*). The relationship of Paz's work to the present project is similar to that of the other critics whose work was reviewed earlier in this chapter in that his analysis is also heavily subject-centered. Although Paz's early works were influenced by Marxism, surrealism and existentialism, by the time he wrote about Sor Juana he had essentially left behind his earlier interest in historical materialism. In the epilogue to his book on Sor Juana, he explains his aversion to pursuing a historical materialist understanding of history describing such histories as prone to the pitfalls of determinism:

> The temptation to see culture—the arts, sciences, beliefs, ideas—as a reflection of society and of the forces at war within society is probably as old as history itself. In the last century and a half, under the combined influence of Marxism and positivism, many historians have adopted this view. I confess that I have always felt it was an aberration to see Provençal poetry as a consequence of the social system of the twelfth century, or Sappho's poems as a product of slavery. What has always struck me is the opposite phenomenon: art's relative independence from social determinism. (*Traps* 471)

Even though Paz's description of Marxism is perhaps as simplistic and mechanistic as he deems historical materialism to be, his arguments throughout *The Traps of Faith* are not always as

devoid of nuance as is the above description. Still, his adamant rejection of materialism causes him to eschew the possibility of really explaining historical processes. In the opening section to his book Paz makes clear his rejection of materialism and his preference for utilizing aesthetic categories to construct his analysis. In the following quote he employs the aesthetic category of *rhythm* to express the looseness and elusiveness of the relationship between art and social formations and historical change:

> That rhythm exists is evident to me. Its relation to historical and social change is less clear: I do not see how the use of hyperbaton and periphrasis can be the consequence of the victory of the Battle of Lepanto or the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Nor do I see the relation between Apollinaire's *calligrammes* and unemployment in the vineyards. No one, however, would deny the correspondence between the history of a society and the history of its arts. (52)

In the Epilogue of *The Traps of Faith* Paz develops further the aesthetic nature of his personal approach to reading Sor Juana, this time employing the notion of *rhyme*:

> [H]ow can we deny that there is a kind of harmony, or correspondence, among society's tools, institutions, philosophies, and works of art? […] In any case, we can discount causes while retaining the principle of correspondence. At first a philosophical concept, then an aesthetic, the notion of correspondence can enlighten history. Events, works, and even persons "correspond." More, they "rhyme." Vermeer's painting rhymes with the merchant middle class of the Low Countries in the seventeenth century […] This brief digression has had a double purpose: first, to justify my attempt to establish certain correspondences or rhymes—it would be too much to call them explanations—between the history of New Spain, the person of Sor Juana, and the character of her work; second, to show that her "conversion" and the social and political events of 1962 were joined not by an impossible causality but by a real correspondence. (472-3)

Multiple components in the above description serve to help distill the logic of Paz's approach to literary analysis. First and foremost, it is important to note his insistence upon the *autonomy* of art with respect to its social and historical context. Very quickly, one can surmise that Paz adheres to a notion of literary history that makes a clear division between text and

context. De-linking these two is necessary for generating an idealist notion of history whose function is to locate the transhistorical element amidst the historical debris that sometimes obscures its presence. In Paz's analysis, the transhistorical element he wishes to locate is true poetry, i.e., the expression of authentic subjectivity. The movement away from explanatory principals in favor of notions like the above mentioned *correspondence, rhythm* and *rhyme* allows Paz to maintain the looseness of the relationship between text and context as he upholds two positions simultaneously throughout his argument: 1) —that Sor Juana's work reflects her historical moment and 2) —that her work transcends her moment, as does all true art. Additionally, the election of this vocabulary serves to highlight the fact that Paz approaches his analysis as a poet and derives his critical authority from this identity; who better to recognize authentic poetry than an authentic poet?

Somewhat ironically perhaps, Paz happens to be a poet whose understanding of poetry also *corresponds* quite neatly with the notion of poetry produced in his specific historical moment. And as can be expected, his reading of Sor Juana in turn reproduces this same bourgeois definition of art/poetry. Paz began his poetic career as a teenager publishing for the first time in 1933. In 1937, he went to Spain in support of the Republicans and as mentioned above, he was impacted by European surrealism and existentialism (Grenier, 28-9, 62-3). As one of his biographers, Fernando Vizcaíno, explains, Paz's political evolution resulted in a shift away from the left: "El poeta, asimismo, conoce ambos extremos. Su biografía es la travesía que va de una encendida juventud de izquierda a una no menos polémica y ardiernte madurez caracterizada por la crítica persistente del socialismo y sus mitos" (72). Eventually, the more committed leftist stance of his earlier works retreated into an idealist humanism that sought to create (as poet) and locate (as critic) the presence of more transhistorical poetic values. Rodríguez describes the 19th and 20th century as a period when artists and writers became "increasingly aware of their marginalized and inoperative role in the new set of *ideological/capitalist* relations" (Rodríguez, *State* 214). The break between artist and society that had been widening since the 19th century and was evidenced in the movement toward *mauditisme*, pure art, bohemia, etc., influenced the way that Octavio Paz thought about art; he was clearly an artist who was aware of this breach and who explored various modes of poetry

in response, attempting to find the ideal place from which to speak. After his initial exploration of materialism, he eventually shifted to a position that attempted to separate ideological production from politics and history favoring the notion of the autonomy of the human spirit and thus the relative autonomy of artistic production. Fully aware of his personal rejection of the notion of causality, Paz's Epilogue to *The Traps of Faith* makes plain that he is more concerned to discover that which is timeless in Sor Juana than to explain the historicity of her work. Historically speaking, Paz's retreat from materialism seems to embody the disillusion of the left that marked his period as well as the resulting embrace of the transhistorical as a possible escape from a bleak reality, a retreat from the material into the ideal.

In *State, Stage, Language* Rodríguez argues that at least from the beginning of the 20th century the impact of positivism changed the way that literature was understood and analyzed as well as created (31). Literary modernism adopted certain notions that were informing the positivist sciences, thus developing the call for a new modern poetry, pure poetry, poetry "in itself"; the strict separation of fields meant a new division between politics and poetry so to speak, and resulted in a society ever more utilitarian; the only space for the poet to specialize was on the margin. If to be absolutely modern with respect to the sciences meant that one had to be civilized, technologically advanced and specialized in one's field, (i.e., *pure)* then for a poet, this same level of specialization and purification would often consist of becoming a social aberration, an anomaly, marginal[40]. In the quote below, Paz gestures toward a historical analysis of poetic practices, but by the end of the passage poetry has been returned to its eternal status. The notion of poetic practice presented in the text reproduces this discourse of poetry on the margin and poetry outside of time:

> It is possible that the unpopularity of certain genres—poetry, for example, following Baudelaire and the Symbolists—is a result of the implicit censorship of a democratic and progressivist society. Bourgeois rationalism is, in a manner of speaking, constitutionally averse to poetry. Hence poetry, from the beginnings of the modern era—that is, since the last years of the eighteenth century—has been a form of rebellion. Poetry is not a genre in harmony with the modern world; its innermost nature is hostile or indifferent

[40] For a full discussion of the logic of modern poetic practices see *State, Stage, Language: The Production of the Subject*, especially "Part Two: Mythologics (or On Current Poetic Practices)".

> to the dogmas of modern times, progress and the cult of the future. […] Our society believes in history: newspapers, radio, television, the *now*; poetry, by its very nature, is atemporal. (*Traps* 5)

For Paz the marginalized artist in Sor Juana's work is the lyric poet who is able to remain at the very least for brief moments, outside, on the margin of history and in touch with the eternal. True poetry is not really the vehicle for any historical ideology, but for that which transcends ideology and is unsullied by history or historical processes. For this reason, Paz will argue that true poets always "express their age but simultaneously transcend it; they are its exception, everything that in some way escapes the tyranny of styles, tastes, and canons" (380).

While in the above quote, Paz defines poetry *since the beginnings of the modern era* as a form of rebellion, it could be argued that for him, true poetry is *always* a form of rebellion, to the degree that the human spirit is required to compete with the trappings of historical context in order to find expression. As Rodríguez explains, the avant-garde produced a notion of poetic genius as a reality without history[41].

> Of what precisely, did that "ingenuousness" consist which, we have alleged, was the common denominator of the different "spirits of the avant-garde" of the 1920s and '30s? Quite simply, of a unanimous, unquestioning belief in poetry (or literature), understood as an eternal truth and, consequentially, as something that could not be problematized. [...] the unquestioning belief, namely that *poetry is poetry*, and that there are no buts about it. (*State* 213)

[41] Paz identifies the expression of the universal subject/soul that asserts itself, but his analysis confuses what are early manifestations of bourgeois ideology in Sor Juana's texts with what can only be described as the discourse of 19th century romanticism. To make matters even more confusing, Paz will also be guilty of confusing the functions of the "baroque language" in Sor Juana's texts (of feudal extraction and exhibiting a feudalizing logic) with the aims of symbolism in the 19th century, such as the pursuit of pure poetry/form. Although there is not time here for a full analysis of Paz's conflation of specific feudal and bourgeois discourses, it is worth noting briefly that his analysis even goes so far as to compare Sor Juana's poetry directly with that of Mallarmé. For Paz, these two very distinct bodies of work represent but two different instances of the same phenomenon, that of poetic expression. Paz's tendency to view poetry as a transhistorical reality and to thereby conflate Sor Juana's work/identity with that of the bourgeois poet par excellence makes it very difficult for him to provide an accurate historical analysis of her literary production; his analysis, for example, has is no way of accounting for the fact Sor Juana's poetic "I" is one that often wavers considerably between defining itself as the expression of the sensitivity or personal merit of the poet and the expression of service to one's lord/Lord (often in the form of obedience to one's God-given nature). This is surely not the same historical phenomenon as that represented in the work of Mallarmé.

Although Paz falls into the camp that perceives cultural production as largely independent from social and political structures, according to the critic, the autonomy of such cultural objects is not absolute and poets are often unable to remain uninfluenced or unencumbered by historical factors; the human spirit is eternally present, but it is obligated to express itself through the particular spirit of the age, and the spirit of the age can at times be unfavorable to individual expression. As a result, the text is often bogged down with elements related to the context, so much so that what is really truly poetry may only be a small portion of the works of a given poet, as is the case with Sor Juana, according to Paz. The job of the critic will be to reveal to the reader that which is true poetry, or true manifestation of the human spirit.

Just as the other critics mentioned earlier in this chapter were intent upon locating the true voice of Sor Juana, Paz is focused upon a similar task. His division of her works into the merely rhetorical or conventional versus what he understands to be sincere poetic production corresponds to the divisions discussed earlier in the chapter in feminist criticism between the *masked* and *unmasked* Sor Juana, between the *religious* and the *secular* Sor Juana, between the *public* and the *private* Sor Juana. In spite of the important differences between the modernist and postmodernist sensitivities in question—particularly, the contrast between the notion of a unified versus a splintered version of subjectivity—in all of these cases, bourgeois ideology reproduces its key notion of subjectivity by pruning away the artificial in the form of religious dogma and public decorum in order to find a true voice in the authentic, creative, secular, personal and/or private Sor Juana. It is important to understand that the binaries typically in operation in critical texts on Sor Juana—religious/secular, rhetorical/sincere, political/personal—are all articulations, or ideological manifestations of the public/private split that characterizes capitalist society and informs bourgeois ideology at the most basic level. (Rodríguez, *Theory* 53-4) Paz, like the critics discussed above, works to unearth the genuine poet, *the private self that opposes the public persona*, the truth of the "I" that is hidden in the text.

Paz adheres closely throughout his argument to the notions of *text* and *historical context*, a strategy that seems to embed the text in historical processes, but one that in all reality often serves to salvage the text from its historicity when necessary. In Paz's work on Sor

Juana, the separation between text and context is often required in order to safeguard the notions of *freedom*, *sincerity* and *will to personal expression* that must be in operation in poetry according to bourgeois ideology. Because he cannot conceive of poetic practice without these elements, Paz can only interpret the still feudalizing productive logic of many of the texts in question as rhetoric, artifice and the fulfillment of obligation. In the following quote, Paz begins his quest to identify the most authentic poetic expressions produced by Sor Juana. He outlines for the reader the problems that this pursuit will encounter, the main problem being that of Baroque form; the fact that Sor Juana's poetry obeys the dictates of form that marked her moment means that the sincere expression of her life experience is clouded and must be extracted carefully. From the start, Paz indicates his predilection for Sor Juana's love poems, but then warns the reader not to assume that even these provide any sort of direct access to Sor Juana's personal experience:

> Of course, there are the love poems. These are many, and some are very profound. All of them reveal a perfect knowledge of what could be called the dialectic of love: jealously, coolness, absence, loss, requited love. Two reasons keep me from accepting the testimony of the poems. First, we do not know the dates of the *romances*, *endechas*, and sonnets. Second, the poetry of that period is not confessional poetry. Sincerity was a value for the romantics, as it is for us moderns; it was not so for the poets of the seventeenth century. Baroque poetry presents the reader with archetypical schemes of love and of the passions, but the reader must not or cannot infer that those texts have any confessional value. (*Traps* 103)

Although Paz makes plain here that Sor Juana's poems should not be read as a confession of her emotions and experiences, this admission does not deter him from his ultimate goal of discovering just how these poems do, in fact, express her life. As his argument develops, Paz reveals to the reader the sincerity and authenticity that really do inform these poems, helping the reader to look beyond the conventionality of the surface of the text. Sor Juana's personal experience cannot be perceived directly, but rather indirectly, in her poetic expression. Paz utilizes the opposition between form and content in order to begin to extract authenticity. While he begins by stating that both her form and content are largely

conventional, he gradually complicates this argument until he arrives at a new position where the form remains conventional, rhetorical and encumbered with decorum, but the content does in fact reveal something of sincere experience. Paz's understanding of form and content is much like his understanding of context and text; just as sincere/authentic content can be bogged down by the demands of traditional forms, a text (understood as expression of the author's lived experiences) can be bogged down by a historical context that prevents fluid communication of the individual. In the following quote where he discusses *Romance 56*, Paz moves slightly closer to his discovery of the sincere Sor Juana:

> The theme is traditional and so is the manner of treating it. Thus as testimony of a love affair its value is doubtful. Still, I am of a divided mind; as one critic has noted, there is a kind of ambiguity between the profession of love for God, the theme of the poem, and the sudden irruption of a personal memory. Oscillation between the fiction demanded by the genre and the confession of a lived experience. (104)

The tension that Paz identifies as existing between text and context, between form and content, between Sor Juana and her historical moment, becomes palpable in the above quote as does the logic of subjectivity that informs the whole analysis. He consistently warns the reader not to assume that Sor Juana's true self is expressed at the surface level while simultaneously promising that her individuality is, in the last instance, informing the text. In the following somewhat inconsistent quote, Paz continues to explore the idea that even in spite of adherence to traditional forms, and even perhaps in spite of her own conscious intentions, Sor Juana does express herself:

> Like all poets of her time, Sor Juana does not attempt to express herself; she constructs verbal objects that are emblems or monuments that illustrate a vision of love transmitted by poetic tradition. […] I do not mean that the poetry of Sor Juana contains nothing personal; rather, that her most intimate experiences tend to conform to and be transfigured within traditional forms, from meter to metaphor to conceit. (279)

Again, the critic presents Sor Juana's true self as somehow able to shine through the overlay of form.

As he searches for the authentic Sor Juana in the text, Paz displays an ideological bias for plain speech as the best vehicle for true poetic expression and he refers to the "defect" of "verbal incontinence" that oftentimes marred Sor Juana's work. Referring to Sor Juana's poetic language in her *redondillas* he states: "It is a pity that the poem is prolonged in repetitious conceits and cleverness; enticed by her initial achievements, Sor Juana did not know when to stop" (287). For Paz, plain speech or "everyday language" (284) is preferable to Baroque language, and from his perspective, "her century abused the art of cleverness" (294). "The solemn and the sententious are ceremonial garb. There is another Sor Juana, simple and fluid, plain and ironic" (301). Still, for Paz, the human spirit expresses itself in Sor Juana's work even in spite of the "backward step or dark moment" that was the feudal period according to the critical perspective in question (Rodríguez, *State* 35). It is not surprising then that Paz determines that the sonnet is the form that Sor Juana's best poetry takes (*Traps* 288). But even her sonnets are not exempt from the impact of external factors and Paz laments in multiple places the attention to form that encumbers the poetic spirit in Sor Juana's poetry.

> The sonnet is notable for the perfection of its composition. But it is a shame that two such deeply felt experiences—loving friendship for Laura and fear of death—were turned into a verbal construct driven by the mechanics of rhetoric rather than true poetic spirit. (133)

Paz is unable to apprehend the historical nature of his own ideological position and his analysis consistently reproduces notions familiar to bourgeois ideology including the preference for plain, transparent language as well as the notions of a rich interior emotional life and poetry as the natural expression of passion. As his analysis continues, his desire to release Sor Juana and her poetry from the chains of context and form becomes increasingly apparent. Historical context and rigid forms are described as heavy whereas true poetry is simple, light and ethereal; it is spirit and has wings:

> [W]e often see her wit as a shallow spectacle without risks, mere gymnastics […] The conceit and clever invention surprise us; true grace *transports* us, it has wings. But there is more than cleverness in these *romances*; in some—those of love and

friendship—there is passion, and in almost all there are passages of authentic poetry, that is, grace. (302)

While many of the more recent critics of Sor Juana mentioned earlier in this chapter attempt to somehow differentiate their readings of the nun's work from that of Octavio Paz, one central narrative remains intact in almost all of these analyses—the tendency to oppose two Sor Juanas, the masked and the unmasked, the obedient and the subversive, the public and the private. For each of the critics in question, only one of the two is true while the other, though often perceived as historically necessary, is deemed artificial. It is important to recognize the fact that so many critics of Sor Juana's work do perceive, to varying degrees, the ideologically contradictory nature of her writing. On the other hand, the ideological bias of the criticism in question is also stark, and Paz, along with Merrim, Stavans, Sabat de Rivers, Peden, et al., finds that Sor Juana's identity as poet was the one that reflected her true self. In perhaps one of the most telling moments in his analysis of Sor Juana, Paz describes her as "A nun by profession but a poet by birth" (249) and then later again as a "nun without a calling" (285). His conclusion is especially fascinating when compared with the summation of Sor Juana's life according to her contemporary, Diego Calleja, whose hagiography is analyzed in the first chapter of this discussion.

As we saw in Chapter One, Calleja recorded Sor Juana's life as an example of Christian purification. He describes her birth in a room called *La Celda* (*The Cell*) that, according to Calleja, signaled her calling to the monastic life even from the very moment of her birth (13). For Calleja, Sor Juana's love of letters and practice of poetry were merely preparation for her total submission to a life informed by the scriptures (18, 20, 37). Interestingly, Calleja also used the word "artificial" in his description of Sor Juana's work, but in order to refer to her pursuit of earthly sciences and poetic practice. These were *artificial* while her final abnegation of her library and total dedication to a life of spiritual meditation were *true*. It is worthy of note that Paz's conclusion could be described in a certain sense as an inverted mirror image of that of Calleja. Calleja wrote his hagiography to demonstrate Sor Juana to be first and foremost a nun, servant of God, and a poet only in so far as it was necessary to glorify God for a time through this talent; Paz, on the other hand, constructs a reading of Sor Juana that demonstrates that

she was, above all, a true poet at heart. On a certain level, the comparison between Paz's and Calleja's versions of Sor Juan allows us to compare directly Sor Juana as viewed from two historical and contradictory optics—a feudalizing interpretation of her life versus a bourgeois one—Sor Juana presented/produced as *servant* versus Sor Juana presented/produced as *subject*/poet. As Rodríguez observes, "There can be no doubting the existence of literary ideology, which facilitates the reproduction of the actual conditions of production" (*State* 21).

Although Paz engages with the historical, ironically, like Calleja, he is always more interested in the eternal, the difference being that Paz endeavors to extract that which is understood as eternal according to the logic of bourgeois ideological production; thus, the constant opposition of the subject and history:

> As we consider this theme we confront once again what may be an insuperable historical limitation: on the one hand, the society in which Sor Juana lived—her culture, her ethic, her social hierarchies—help us to understand her; on the other, it conceals her from us. Her essential attitudes were responses, often unconscious, to the system of manners and prohibitions of the Catholic society of New Spain. Her most intimate and personal tendencies were indissolubly and secretly bound to the morality and customs of her era. There is a point at which the social is indistinguishable from the individual. Sor Juana, like each of us, is the expression and the negation of her time, its hero and its victim. That is why, like every human being, she is an enigma. (*Traps* 226)

While Paz seems to flirt here for a brief moment with the exploration of a notion of causality in which the individual is not the ultimate causal locus, in the end, the sacrosanct nature of subjectivity cannot be compromised. The subject is ever present, but ever elusive, and it is precisely this elusiveness that feeds its construction as transcendent and timeless. Society and culture, by way of comparison, are understood as more concrete and historical, alternately revealing and concealing the voice of the subject.

In spite of his apparent obliviousness to his own ideological bias, Paz's argument does pay a certain amount of attention to ideological discourses dedicating an important portion of his analysis to comparing and contrasting the "intellectual currents", as he describes them, of *Scholasticism* and *Neoplatonism* and their influence in the work of Sor Juana (215). For Paz,

however, such currents of thought are ultimately understood as external to the individual rather than as part of the very productive logic of the individual inscribed in a set of social relations. As a result, different currents of thinking are contemplated as more or less useful to the individual. While the reproduction of scholastic arguments and forms is generally envisioned in Paz's text as a burdensome compulsion for the nun, Neoplatonism is depicted as a refuge for Sor Juana, a vehicle for truer expression: "Sor Juana's Platonism, like that of so many in the Renaissance and the age of the Baroque, fitted within—or, more exactly, was grafted onto—the Scholastic tradition. […] For her, Platonism was both a vital and an intellectual necessity" (215-6). Paz's division of Sor Juana's poetry into more conventional and more sincere works corresponds to the separation he makes between works that espouse scholastic versus neoplatonic discourses. For Paz, scholastic religious poetry is artifice: "Sor Juana's love poems in the Scholastic or doctrinal mode are only a curiosity" (283). Referring to certain samples of her lyric poetry, however, Paz finds that "some are truly memorable. These are the poems that respond to real experiences, in the sense I earlier described" (283). The incorporation of scholastic and neoplatonic currents is raised to the level of conscious thought processes in Sor Juana and she is portrayed as largely aware of the contradiction between the two modes of thinking.

Although he references the lord/serf relations still operating during Sor Juana's lifetime, nowhere in his analysis does Paz describe the logic of the social system or set of social relations that would eventually replace the feudal system, except to reference here and there ideas that are more valued in the modern period. Throughout his discussion, Paz presents lord/serf relations in much the same way as he presents both Scholasticism and Baroque style, as something externally imposed upon Sor Juana. He does not understand the lord/serf relation as one that precludes or even radically contradicts the logic of subjectivity at a very basic level. Because he does not historicize either lord/serf relations or subject/subject relations, he does not oppose these in historical terms nor does he understand literary production according to the rupture that occurs between the two social systems in question. Instead, the subject is understood as equally present in both historical periods although required to endure the encumbrance of lord/serf identities during the feudal period. The lord/serf relation is described

in Paz's text as part of an arbitrary historical context, as an external factor that affected the work of a given author, but never as the productive logic of the text itself. Sor Juana's courtly poetry, in particular, was most affected by the historical burden of the notion of service:

> Sor Juana's courtly poetry, all moved by a single gravitational force: the loyalty of vassal to lord, the love of the prince for his subject. Courtly order is cosmic order, and poetry merely reproduces the dual hierarchy of the universe and society. On the one hand, triumph of form; on the other, substitution of ideology for reality. (190)

This quote must be scrutinized carefully because although Paz does admit the dominance of feudal ideology, he also dismisses it as something artificial. For Paz, courtly poetry is only form, mere artifice, not real, not authentic. And just as courtly poetry represents the "triumph of form", lord/serf relations, by extension, also represent the triumph of form or artifice from within the logic of Paz's arguments. While Paz is able to comprehend to a certain degree that the poetry of resurgent feudalism is one that reproduces the basic relationship between lord and vassal, he is unable to entertain the idea that contemporary poetry is just as historical and reproduces the logic of subjectivity upon which bourgeois social relations depend. For Paz, the relationship between lord and vassal is *ideological*, or rather *false*, while relationships between free subjects correspond to what he describes as *reality*, in other words, *true*. Subject/subject relations, at least in the realm of the private (away from the public/political), are understood by Paz as transparent, sincere, real and above all, transhistorical.

Sor Juana's courtly poetry is contrasted in Paz's discussion with her lyric poetry; while the courtly poetry is dominated by form and generally lacking authenticity, Paz finds evidence of unique personal experience recorded in the examples of lyric poetry. The critic's emphasis on intimate, personal experience again privileges the bourgeois notion of the private subject, the notion of life understood as a series of unfolding personal experiences. Still, in Sor Juana, the expression of the personal is always mediated by the imposition of impersonal formulas, according to Paz:

> Both poems are impersonal—impersonal in a paradoxical way. The biographical element, the 'experience,' is the nucleus of both; but it has been neutralized by being expressed in the archetypal forms: concepts, antitheses, Latin erudition, Christian

> theology, courtly formulas. […] In the baroque century, in order to be recognizable, individual experience had to accommodate itself to archetypes conceived in philosophy and rhetoric. The personal and unique tones of each experience evaporated in favor of the generic, abstract, and universal. A lived experience was transformed from something entirely personal into yet another variation—a specimen—of a vital and moral typology. (133)

Paz makes an astute observation when he states that the notion of *individual experience* was "unrecognizable" to the 17th century reader, in other words, that life during this period was not measured in terms of the accumulation of individual experiences. Here, Paz has apprehended that textual production of the transition was in many ways more concerned to express the "universal" over the "personal", or the Truth of creation rather than an individual perspective. At the same time that Paz recognizes this reality, however, it is clear that he misunderstands this kind of textual production when he assumes that a text, in the last instance, always originates in lived, personal experience. The expression of individual experience was not, as Paz claims, forced to accommodate itself within archetypes, but rather, the very notions of *the individual* and *personal experience* were being invented at the onset of a new set of social relations. Paz is right when he states that *the universal* took precedence over *the individual* in 17th century writing, but his theoretical approach only allows him to understand this reality in negative terms, referring to the Baroque period as one in which the full expression of subjectivity was denied. For Paz, the particular historical context weighs on the text, literally muffling the voice of the individual poet in question: "personal feelings, subjected to the dual tyranny of the baroque aesthetic and decorum, are decanted, sublimated, and congealed." (135). The subject is obligated to soldier on beneath the weight of the historical/political context.

In Paz's analysis the relationship between author and language is intimate, private. For this reason, he describes Sor Juana's poetry as subjected to external tyrannies all related to the public sphere where politics and decorum are understood to reside. But Paz reads this split somewhat prematurely in Sor Juana. Again, the issue is one of history and the fact that Paz fails to contemplate the rupture between two very distinct historical experiences of language. For

Paz, Sor Juana is always a poet attempting to express personal truths in spite of her context. Rodríguez approaches the situation altogether differently explaining that:

> ni Góngora, ni Garcilaso, ni Quevedo, etc., consideraron jamás que la lengua fuera suya. La lengua para el barroco era una cosa sustancial, que estaba allí fuera como cualquier otro objeto, como una mesa o una casa o una plaza, algo que, en cualquier caso, era propiedad del Estado, y donde uno tenía que inscribirse mostrando su inteligencia, su ingenio o su oscuridad. ("Experiencia" 116)

That the notion of the private, the personal, is only beginning to be produced in Sor Juana's moment is completely missing in Paz's analysis—language simply belongs to the author. Nowhere does Paz consider that language in the 17th century belonged to God and/or the State, which also meant that writing, as we have already seen in the previous chapter, was always inflected with the notion of service.

Paz's arguments become entangled when he attempts to salvage Sor Juana's poetry on the basis that we should not expect poetry then to be what poetry is now. At this point, he does seem genuinely interested in historicizing and able to accept to a degree the conventionality of modern poetry, but as recurs throughout his analysis, eventually his understanding of poetry as something eternal makes the task of historicizing problematic. Speaking again about Sor Juana's writing for the court he states:

> Modern critics have complained of the triviality of many of these compositions, and several have deplored their overly colloquial tone. Aside from the fact that Sor Juana is never, or almost never, vulgar or tasteless—just the opposite of Lope and Quevedo—this reproach is particularly inappropriate today, when conversational language is used by almost every contemporary poet. Furthermore, in these poems colloquial expressions are rare; exactly the opposite criticism can be made: Sor Juana overuses learned allusions, artifice, and convolutions. […] I do not pretend that dactylic *romances* in swinglike rhythms or the echoing *ovillejos* and courtly sonnets can be taken as models of great poetry, but I do believe that they are examples of verbal mastery. (*Traps* 187)

It is important to focus on the notion of "great poetry" that Paz mentions here. What defines great poetry for Paz is above all, *originality*, *sincerity* and *personal experience*, notions that work

at the ideological level toward the production of the subject of bourgeois relations. Although Paz was well aware of the fact that Sor Juana's poetry did not evince these values in the same way that contemporary poetry does, much of his text is dedicated to demonstrating that originality, sincerity and personal experience are present in Sor Juana. In order to locate these more precisely within her body of work, Paz will make one more crucial distinction—the separation of Sor Juana's poetic work into poetry with a public function and poetry with a private function. Paz describes Sor Juana's courtly poetry and plays as texts that "perform a public function; they are verbal emblems of an understood relationship in the body politic. Although this relation assumes many forms, it can be reduced to its simplest; the bond that unites the lord and his vassals" (188). At the same time, he defines Sor Juana's lyric poetry as a mode much more concerned with the realm of the private: "Some of her most deeply felt *romances* on love and her inner life, certain *endechas* and *decimas* (especially those on the theme of the portrait she sent to the Countess de Paredes), are poems only she could have written" (481). Paz describes Sor Juana as dual, as having on the one hand an outer half that was constrained by her circumstances and exhibited a clear deference to authority, and on the other hand, an inner self marked by, "her profound determination to be what she wanted to be, her patient and buried quest for psychic and moral self-sufficiency that would serve as the foundation for her life as a poet and an intellectual" (297). The fact that Paz distinguishes between public and private poetry reveals the ideological nature of his arguments, as does the fact that he consistently privileges the private over the public. For Paz, public poetry is not true poetry; it cannot be defined as "great poetry". What is problematic in Sor Juana, according to the critic, is precisely the fact that "etiquette" takes over, etiquette being defined as the "figurative language" of the symbolic order in which the poet lived. According to Paz, etiquette is also "ceremony" that "reproduces the order of things and beings in the universe, from plants to stars and from animals to angels" (188-9). Paz understands poetry that reproduces the logic of this hierarchical system as poetry defined by a *public function*. As we have seen, Rodríguez and Salvador define feudal textual production as "public" as well, but only in order to explain the fact that the private sphere did not exist in feudal ideology (Rodríguez and Salvador *Introduction* 50). For Rodríguez, the public/private split is historical and only beginning to

function during the period of the transition, while for Paz, this split is transhistorical and therefore never thematicized in his work. The fact that this split is being produced in the period of the transition can be perceived in the confusion it creates in Paz's analysis of Sor Juana. As might be expected, for Paz, Sor Juana's best poetry can only be her most personal poetry, her lyric poetry, and most narrowly defined, the sonnets where she speaks of what might have been authentic subjective experiences. For Paz, Sor Juana is at her best when she turns inward, away from the public, to focus on the private:

> Sor Juana writes at the end of a great poetic era, although one tainted by rhetorical affectation; she inherits the tendencies of her time and shares in its style or styles. Like all great poets, she was saved by her sensibility, her creativity, and her instinct. Almost always she said what had to be said. What only she could say. (*Traps* 481-2)

As both critic and poet, Paz makes a final evaluation of Sor Juana's work according to two principal categories—*originality* and *sincerity*. As he explains, his critique is not formulated without complications relating to the realities of the Baroque:

> There is a great divide between the Baroque period and our own: romanticism, with its exaltation of sincerity and spontaneity. The romantic doctrine proclaimed the unity of author and work. Baroque art differentiated and separated them to the greatest degree possible: the poem is not a testimony but a verbal form that is at the same time the reiteration of an archetype and a variation on the inherited model. The originality of the seventeenth century differs profoundly from that of romanticism. For the latter, originality lies in *genio*, creative genius; for the former, in *ingenio*, wit or cleverness. The nineteenth century conceives of creative genius as the highest of all conditions: it is an almost superhuman capacity for feeling, imagining, creating. (279)

The above quote portrays very well the problem that Octavio Paz confronts throughout his analysis as he endeavors to locate evidence of the modern subject within examples of Baroque textual production. When Paz describes Baroque art as one that separated the author from the work, the magnitude of his problem is clear. How can baroque poetry be salvaged? For what is poetry if it is not the original expression of real and personal lived experiences? What Paz fails to understand is that it was not that Baroque art separated the author from the work, but

rather that the very notions of *art* and *authorship*, as we understand them today, were still early in their inception. Because much of the poetry he examines is concerned with the reproduction of the notion of service to one's Lord, a poetic practice without a strong "I" at the center of the text, Paz's efforts to locate the authentic voice of the author are often somewhat misconceived. Still, he persists, and as a result, his readings of the texts often infuse them with modern poetic ideals in ahistorical, albeit creative, ways.

Once he establishes that the crucial ingredient of personal experience does play a part in Sor Juana's poetic expression, Paz is in position to appraise Sor Juana's work in terms of its sincerity and originality. In order to do so, however, he first has to make the concession that he is at pains to formulate above, that Baroque poetry did not allow for these two categories to overlap in the way that more modern poetic forms do. Because Sor Juana's poetry does not conform to this (bourgeois) understanding of poetry, Paz is forced to locate originality and sincerity in Sor Juana by other means. It is at this point when the critic is obligated to borrow from both the romantic and formalist camps. As Rodríguez explains:

> The open and technical readings reside in our ideological unconscious as not opposed but as complimentary or inverted readings. At times (and above all in the case of poetry), we tend to identify with the author, or to recognize ourselves in his or her 'experience.' At other times we are amazed by his/her technical artifice, the brilliance—as we say—of his language, the rigor of the plot, the psychological solidity of his characters, the skill in the use of phonic resources, etc. (*State* 33)

Thus, Paz evaluates Sor Juana along two separate vertices; he begins by assessing her technical skill and then measures her ability to make her soul transparent to the reader. His first conclusion is that Sor Juana's *originality* can be observed in her ability to perfect prescribed forms. When Paz describes certain of her sonnets as "empty sonnets" (*Traps* 135), the reader should understand that they may be devoid of the *sincerity* of emotion/experience that one looks for in authentic poetry, but they are not necessarily lacking in *originality* as this can be witnessed in the approach to form. Explaining the precise nature of *originality* in Sor Juana, Paz makes the following observations:

> [H]er mastery is constant. […] a poet in full control of her style. More accurately, styles. She had several—all those typical of her age—and all, as I have said, were distinguished by her handling of chiaroscuro and her sense of form and proportion. […] The originality of her work must be sought not in impossible confessions or even in veiled confidences but in the perfection of her form. (137)

With this gesture, Paz rescues the whole of Sor Juana's poetry as exemplary in terms of originality.

After asserting that Sor Juana's originality can be witnessed in her perfect execution of form, Paz then moves on to the task of discovering the places and ways in which Sor Juana's *sincerity* can be appreciated. Paz's arguments make plain that of the two categories in question—originality and sincerity—sincerity is the most important in the creation of poetry:

> A major portion of Sor Juana's amorous poetry—the same is true of her sacred writing and the rest of her poetic works—is mere exercise, ostentation, exhibition of skill. But what remains, smaller in quantity, consists of poems that satisfy the two highest requisites of art: they are beautiful works and they are authentic works. (280)

Referring to the poems that she wrote over an eight-year period to the Marquis and Marquise de la Laguna, Paz finds irrefutable evidence of the sincere/personal at work:

> The tone of those poems grew more and more intimate and the friendship expressed in them more intense. Extravagant eulogies were mixed with pleas, and picturesque adulation with declarations of exalted love. Was Sor Juana sincere? Yes and no: hyperbole was the norm in that day. Courtesy was second nature to the aristocracy and the upper ranks of the clergy (191). […] Sor Juana's worldly poetry fulfilled a dual purpose; it was a courtly ritual impregnated with political symbolism, and it was a means of privileged communication between the convent and the palace. […] But practicality and self-interest were only one aspect of that relationship; the other, perhaps more important, was a mixture of generous sentiments: gratitude, friendship, and something beyond and distinct from those emotions. The affection Sor Juana felt for the Countess de Paredes, to judge by the tone of the poems she addressed to her, soon turned into a feeling so intense that it can only be called love. (194)

Paz isolates Sor Juana's worldly poetry from liturgical and courtly poetry and then spotlights the key ingredient of true poetry—love. With this, his ideological treatment of Sor Juana is complete. For Paz, where there is sincere love, there can be real poetry, and once he concludes that from 1680 "the Countess of Paredes became the emotional center of Sor Juana's life" (195), the discovery of Sor Juana's truest poetic self is accomplished with relative ease. As he explains, "The poetry of Sor Juana, like that of all poets, is born of her life, as long as we understand that the word 'life' […] designates imagination, ideas, and readings as well as events" (280).

In this portion of his argument, Paz's expressive form imitates the content as he seems to feel that the description of true poetry is best accomplished with poetic expression as well. If true poetry connects souls, Paz's critical text also produces this moment of connection between author and reader, between himself and Sor Juana. Thus his own poetic outpouring:

> Repression is counterproductive and almost always ends in explosion or moral duplicity. […] Platonic sublimation not only inspired great artists, it protected love from the dissipation of libertinism and the frenzy of asceticism. Love is mortal and lethal, as a lucid and bitter Cavalcanti was the first to see. Love is gazing into another's eyes, but that game is soon transformed into fatal fascination: lovers lose their bodies and their souls. Or become bored. Love kills or lovers kill love. To save it, and to be saved, their *united* gazes—following the battle of glances—must be directed upward. This was what Dante told us; in this lay the historical and psychological function of Platonism; and this is what today we can salvage from that tradition. (213)

And then again in the Epilogue:

> These poems in a certain way define her. When I say love poems I include those of loving friendship, a few sacred *romances*, and those in which she reflects upon herself. Love is a passion, a longing that forces us outside ourselves in search of the desired one and then back to search within ourselves for the trace of the beloved, or two contemplate the beloved's ghost in silence. Sor Juana's poetry reproduces this dialectic movement with extraordinary authenticity. (482-3)

It is important to recognize the empiricist gesture in Paz's approach to Sor Juana. The surface of the text has a clear empiricist quality in that *The Traps of Faith* is not unlike a careful archeological exploration of the remnants of Sor Juana's life and work, but the surest evidence of Paz's empiricism is found in the relationship he creates between the subject and the object. Having rejected historical materialism as a theory of knowledge and the notion that it is the theoretical apparatus that produces knowledge of the object, Paz engages the literary text as a knowing subject able to extract the essence of the object. The subject approaches the object in order to separate the superfluous from the essential through an empirical process, through what could even be described as an idealist science. Paz's critical analysis is an idealist defense of essentialism conducted in an empiricist fashion. In the glossary to Ben Brewster's translation of *Reading Capital*, Brewster defines Althusser's notion of "empiricism" in the following manner:

> Althusser uses the concept of empiricism in a very wide sense to include all 'epistemologies' that oppose a given subject to a given object and call knowledge the abstraction by the subject of the essence of the object. Hence the knowledge of the object is part of the object itself. This remains true whatever the nature of the subject (physchological, historical, etc.) in question. So as well as covering those epistemologies traditionally called 'empiricist', this definition includes classical idealism, and the epistemology of Feuerbach and the Young Marx. (Althusser 313)

As he drills down to the level of the subject, Paz clears away the excess of form, the excess of religion, the excess of historical context in order for the subject to be clearly reflected in the object. In this case, the image of the poet is reflected back in the discovery of poetry. As Rodríguez explains, in such cases the critic doesn't conceive of knowledge as being produced by any sort of theoretical apparatus, but rather that the object itself already contains knowledge. This understanding of knowledge is of course ideological and reproduces the subject/object split of bourgeois ideology:

> The famous subject/object relation, considered by all the theoreticians of the classic bourgeoisie, from Kant onwards, to be the key to what they called the 'theory of

knowledge.' According to this theory, a subject that 'knows' always means a subject that is duplicated in an object that it constructs in order to make it its own. (*State* 217)

In other words, Paz's reading of Sor Juana appropriates her ideological production and reconstructs it according to the logic of bourgeois ideological notions.

As Paz moves closer and closer to the private Sor Juana, he also moves ever closer to reproducing the bourgeois notion of poetry and discovering a true poet in the text. In *The Traps of Faith*, Paz reproduces the modern notion of poetry by constructing Sor Juana as poet/subject. Generally speaking, he is somewhat more willing to salvage her courtly and liturgical writing than are certain other of her critics, but this is because of the fact that he reads these (as a poet himself) according to a more technicist reading that finds value in the perfection of formulaic composition. All the oppositional binaries Paz develops, including the division between the alternate identities of nun and poet, between religious and worldly poetry, between rhetorical and sincere expression, are in all reality ideologically constrained oppositions that produce the subject of bourgeois relations as it is articulated according to the public/private split. Like the other critics examined, Paz produces a reading of Sor Juana that understands her first and foremost as a subject, i.e., poet, and not as a servant, with the same resulting loss of historicity. In all of the cases examined, critical work on Sor Juana tends to pay scant attention to the historical class struggle that informs the logic of her texts.

In his book on the renewal of Marxist social theory, Resch makes the point that in many instances, those who have sought to generate a theory of modern social relations have

> accepted elitism by denying its existence, masking domination and exploitation with *euphemistic assertions of* the cooperative nature of the social division of labor, the organic interdependence of social structures, and *the autonomy of culture in relation to political and economic structures.* (emphasis added) (Resch 7)

Octavio Paz is definitely guilty of the last one in this list as he openly insists upon this same *autonomy of cultural production* in both the Prologue and Epilogue to his text and defends it throughout his analysis. It would seem that Paz's wariness regarding vulgar economism leads him to throw out the proverbial baby along with the bathwater and embrace the elitist camp to which Resch refers, leading him to a place where the analysis of class struggle and economic

relations is absent. In the end Paz's work adheres to what Resch refers to as the "Post-Marxist, post-modern triumvirate of theories opposed to historical materialism" (5) that subscribes to *pluralist*, *relativist* and *individualist* notions for explaining history and culture. While all three may be present in Paz's arguments, his analysis is most certainly informed by the notions of pluralism and individualism. Throughout the text, his reference to the nebulous *correspondence* or the *rhyming* of text and context, demonstrates his aversion to stricter notions of causality, and ultimately he aligns himself with a pluralist viewpoint: "Many modern historians seem to have given up the idea of causality; causes are too numerous" (*Traps* 473). With causal relations having been largely dispersed with, Paz is free to mount the defense of individualism, or of the subject that is the core of his text. The critic makes it abundantly clear that Sor Juana's voice is most authentic when faithful to her*self*: "The obstinacy with which she insisted on being herself, her skill and tact in surmounting obstacles, her fidelity to her inner voices […] was (and is) an example of intelligence and will in the service of internal freedom" (297). Perhaps it could be suggested that Paz, along with many other critics, has been even more persistent than Sor Juana herself in defending her *self* as well as her freedom.

Chapter Three: Ideology on Display

Don Pedro (*Aparte*.)
Tan corrido ¡vive el Cielo!
de lo que me ha sucedido
estoy, que ni a hablar acierto;
mas disimular importa,
que ya no tiene remedio
el caso. (Juana, *Los empeños de una casa/Pawns* 250)

Chapter One theorized that Sor Juana's textual production is ideologically hybrid manifesting a set of contradictions particular to the transition between feudalism and capitalism. Chapter Two established the fact that the tendency of normative criticism is to assert the category of the subject of bourgeois relations and as a result, to work toward the erasure of the more feudalizing stamp of Sor Juana's ideological production. Given the critical landscape, much of the discussion so far has been spent attempting to restore, so to speak, the feudalizing aspects of Sor Juana, a gesture that has required the examination of concrete examples of substantialist and animist ideology in the text in order to situate Sor Juana with respect to what Rodríguez describes as "the struggle that lasted for three centuries (in societies with a prolonged transition) between a 'hierarchy of blood' and 'hierarchy of souls'; the struggle, in other words, between the last phase of the feudal nobility and the first phase of the bourgeoisie" (*Theory* 94). Having defended the need for an alternative reading opposed to the proliferation of modernizing accounts of Sor Juana's life and written work, it is now possible to further nuance this analysis regarding the specific ideological extraction of Sor Juana's writing. While this chapter does further explore certain feudalizing aspects of Sor Juana's work, this part of the analysis attempts to illuminate more fully some of the ways that her work reproduced important ideological notions emerging with bourgeois relations. Both the impact of the public/private split as well as the transitional understandings of the notion of *nature* will be explored in order to see how these shaped the action of Sor Juana's theatrical pieces. The first

half of this chapter traces the shift, particular to the period of the transition, from an emphasis on *blood* or *lineage* to an emphasis on *nature* as it appears in two plays by Sor Juana.

3.1 Disturbances in the natural hierarchy

In order to describe more accurately the reality of a compromised substantialism present in the 17th century after animism's dominance had been successfully routed, Rodríguez identifies a resurgent *Aristotelian rationalism* which he describes as a "species of rationalism intermediary to scholasticism and Cartesianism" particular to the Spanish transition (Rodríguez qtd. in Read, *Latin* 47). Representing a sort of compromise between animism and substantialism, Aristotelian rationalism accommodated certain features of both, namely the rationalism and *grounding in matter* characteristic of the feudal scholastic tradition as well as the literal eye particular to the perspectivism characteristic of bourgeois ideology. While both animism and Aristotelian rationalism represent transitional discourses "that facilitate the coexistence of residual with emergent social relations", Aristotelian rationalism develops in this moment as a "discourse more suited to the entrenchment of feudalistic forms" (Read, "Ideologies" 322).

Representing a retreat from Platonizing animism, resurgent Aristotelianism will again privilege substance/matter, or body over spirit. This discourse works to ground all souls in matter (in Sor Juana *matter* is expressed as *nature*) and restore a degree of stasis to the social order, in direct contrast to the animist spiritualization and tendency toward movement (social and otherwise) of the beautiful soul. Because the new forms of social as well as physical mobility that animism had promoted had to be reined in as much as possible, Aristotelian rationalism would serve again to legitimize a feudal hierarchy, but with important modifications at times. The importance formerly attached exclusively to blood, for example, could now conceivably be displaced onto nature, as can be perceived in important texts from the period such as *El examen de los ingenios* de Juan de Huarte which describes a natural hierarchy based on substantialist Galenic science that understood nature according to various temperaments produced by the four humours, heat, cold, humidity and dryness, present in the physical world

(Read, "Ideologies" 328-9). The category of *nature* is key for both Huarte and for Sor Juana; for both of them nature was understood as made up of diverse substances whose relationship one to another could be observed and rationalized; for both of them, the study of the temporal, physical world could be conducted separate from the study of theology, although for Huarte the separation was more drastic and more explicitly stated. While for Sor Juana Theology represented the summit of the sciences, "la Reina de las Ciencias," and the biblical text "el Libro que comprende todos los libros," (*Woman* 33-7) Huarte drew a stricter separation between Theology and Philosophy; as Read explains,

> He stubbornly maintained that miraculous explanations were, in science, illegitimate, short-cut solutions, and that it was possible to explain human nature in rationalist terms. […] God is certainly the *universal* cause of all that happens in the universe, but the scientist is interested, or should be, in secondary causes, on the basis of which causal networks can be explained. (*Juan* 73)

Huarte understood his work as separate from that of the theologians, making a clear distinction between philosophy and theology and taking the rational potential of Aristotelianism to the extreme, as both Rodríguez and Read have observed (Read, "Ideologies" 323). For Huarte, while all of nature was made up of substances initially created by God (understood as Prime Mover), these substances could be observed and comprehended without direct reference to their function as substantial signs or signatures of the divine voice in nature. Even so, and as Read explains in his article, *Ideologies of the Spanish Tradition Revisited: Juan Huarte de San Juan, Juan Carlos Rodríguez, and Noam Chomsky*, Huarte's rationalism must be understood as an example of a still feudalizing *substantialist* science and not as a *positivist* or *empiricist* science (327-8). In Huarte, the literal eye that observes then *reads* the logic of the substances observed, and in this sense this intermediary form of rationalism still relies much more on interpretation or a substantialist reading of temperaments, than upon notions of hypothesis and proof that will eventually be characteristic of empiricism. The interpretation involved is focused on the interpretation of particular mixtures of matter or substance rather than upon a direct deciphering of the divine inscription (or the allegorical meaning) in all earthly substances. Although Huarte himself does reject miraculous explanation applied to the "natural sciences" as

such an appeal to the first cause leaves all intermediate causes unexplored (Read, "Ideologies" 327-8, *Juan* 74), the Aristotelian rationalism that characterized this period did not disallow the possibility of additional layers of scholastic interpretation. For if it can be said that the primary impetus of Aristotelian rationalism was to rationalize rather than allegorize it can also be said that this discourse was flexible and could be bent toward rationalizing *or* toward allegorizing. The latter was true of Sor Juana.

The criticism that views Sor Juana's work, especially in *La Respuesta,* as an appeal for a strict separation between science and theology (or between secular and religious studies) misunderstands the temporal/eternal dichotomy traced earlier in this discussion as well as the still substantial nature of the science of the moment in question. Even in Huarte whose work privileged matter to a much greater degree than that of Sor Juana, the nature of the union between body and soul was a reality that had to be discussed (Read, *Juan* 76). As Read has explained, Huarte's work represents a substantialist naturalism that will even attempt to "treat the Bible as a scientific text, to be elucidated in rationalist terms" (76). Sor Juana's work, by way of contrast, represents a rationalist discourse that constantly checks itself against the scholastic norm; thus her contradictory insistence upon both 1) the possibility of conducting sciences that do not directly engage theological interpretation and 2) the positing of Theology as the highest form of science (Juana, *Woman* 34-7.) As Read insists, it is important to recognize that *science* is not a transhistorical phenomenon; instead it is necessary to have an understanding of the distinct historical "sciences" that informed the texts in question and "their respective problematics" at the moment of their production (*Latin* 84).

In Huarte God has already been displaced to the position of the Prime Mover that acted at creation setting the world of matter in motion. For Huarte, however, matter itself has a logic that can be deciphered apart from direct reference to divine inscription or cause. In Chapter II of his *Examen,* Huarte explains that the tendency to attribute all that happens to miraculous causes, i.e., directly to God, makes understanding the natural world of secondary causes impossible.

> El indicio de que yo más me aprovecho para descubrir si un hombre no tiene el ingenio que es apropiado para la filosofía natural es verle amigo de echar todas las cosas a

> milagro, sin ninguna distinción; y por lo contrario, los que no se contentan hasta saber la causa particular del efecto, no hay que dudar de su buen ingenio. Estos bien saben que hay efectos que inmediatamente se han de reducir a Dios, como son los milagros, y otros a Naturaleza, que son aquellos que tienen causas ordenadas de donde suelen nacer. (Huarte, 239-40).

Sor Juana, on the other hand, did not produce texts characterized by the same degree of separation between the Prime Mover and the worldly phenomenon as witnessed on a daily basis. Her textual production, while characterized by a very strong perspectivism, still also understands nature as a book, in other words as replete with divine inscription. Chapter One describes the continual movement in Sor Juana's letter from literal description to her reading of the signs. This movement does not define Huarte's text in the same was—substantialism in Huarte is much more circumscribed to the realm of what can be understood as a *substantialist science*; the category that Huarte will use to explain the material world around him is that of *substance*, i.e. the four substances or the four humors, and all that he observes in literal fashion can be explained as resulting from the interaction of said substances. His explanations of observed phenomena need not be filtered back through a scholastic, or theological, sieve in the same way that Sor Juana's explanations are.

Even though Sor Juana almost without fail always subjects her observations to a scholasticizing reading, her writing is still considered dangerous by her more Augustinian confessor, Núñez de Miranda, among others. When Sor Juana explains that learning was instinctive for her, stating "esto es tan natural en mí que no necesito de libros" ("Respuesta" 460), she revealed to the likes of Núñez de Miranda that her observations—in this case literal—sometimes relied too much on individual experience, rather than upon scripture, as teacher. For feudal ideology, all of creation was the manifest Word of God, and reading the signs in both the Book of God (Bible) and the Book of Nature (World) was the only means by which one could comprehend and navigate the journey back to God.

In spite of the important differences between Huarte and Sor Juana, the defining feature that their works share is an emphasis on the category of *nature*; in both of them, *nature* eclipsed to a certain degree the feudal category of *blood*. The emphasis on *physiological nature*

that can be found in both Huarte and Sor Juana again represents a sort of ideological compromise between substantialism and animism in that it legitimizes social status in a way that grounds such status in nature/matter/substance more than the notion of *individual merit* characteristic of animism but less than that of *blood* or *lineage* that was determinant for the feudal system. The grounding in matter/nature witnessed in the texts of Huarte and Sor Juana, while ultimately substantializing in a way that worked against the social mobility legitimized in animist discourse, still provided for a degree of flexibility in the social hierarchy not present prior to the period of the transition.

As described in Chapter One, Sor Juana was constantly at pains in *La Respuesta* to defend her scholarly activity in terms of her God-given nature, an argument that consistently *substantilized* or *grounded in matter* her identity as an ecclesiastic and poet. Like all individuals under substantialism, she tended to obey her nature, and her nature was characterized by the compulsion to observe, study, write and even rhyme: "Pues si vuelvo los ojos a la tan perseguida habilidad de hacer versos—que en mí es tan natural, que aun me violento para que esta carta no lo sean, […] he buscado muy de propósito cuál sea el daño que puedan tener" (*Woman* 87). Along with her letter to the Bishop, Sor Juana's plays also reproduced the notion that individual natures are grounded in matter, but as is generally the case in the transition, never without contradiction. In the following section, one of our goals is to explore some of the ways that Aristotelian rationalism helped to shape the historical reconfiguration of the feudal hierarchy, specifically examining how the ideological flexibility of this discourse allowed for an important shift away from an emphasis on *blood* to an emphasis on *nature*. Sor Juana's two cape and sword comedies, *Amor es más laberinto* and *Los empeños de una casa*, both reproduce the feudal notion of stasis while at the same time registering the proclivity for movement that will characterize the capitalist system on the horizon.

Los empeños de una casa was commissioned for performance at a celebration at the viceregal palace in Mexico City most likely in 1683 or 1684, and both the play and its ancillary texts were published as a unit in Seville in 1692 and in Barcelona in 1693 (Hernández Araico xiv). *Amor es más laberinto*, whose second of three acts was not written by Sor Juana herself,

but by Juan de Guevera[42] (Salceda XVI), was performed in Mexico in January of 1689 and published along with *Los empeños* in Spain in 1692 and 1693 (XXI). Both of these plays are characterized by the feudalizing thematics of honor, blood and vengeance, but they also reproduce to a certain degree the notion of the beautiful soul, or the proto-subject of bourgeois relations whose logic informs various animist passages where the affinity of souls is expressed in lyric form[43]. Both of Sor Juana's plays reproduce the feudal notion of a fixed social hierarchy in their progression from disorder to order, from motion to a state of rest. Both plays represent the resolution of an initial state of chaos, disorder and confusion and are marked by characters in frenzied motion who return, by the end, to a calmer state of rest once they have been restored to their natural place and granted permission to marry individuals corresponding to their social rank. While the feudal hierarchy is reasserted in each of these plays, elements of bourgeois ideology are also accommodated here in a highly contradictory mix as both plays register a certain shift away from blood/lineage as the key category for legitimizing social position. In Sor Juana, the grounding in matter or substance characteristic of resurgent Aristotelianism is generally achieved through an emphasis on one's *substantial nature* rather than solely upon one's blood as indicative of the quality of one's substance. To complicate the scenario even further, the notion of *individual merit* characteristic of animism is also present here. The shift away from blood/lineage is particularly clear in the case of *Amor es más laberinto* where the main character, Teseo, prizes his valor over his noble birth.

In *Amor es más laberinto*, Sor Juana reworks the ancient story of the Minotaur and Thesius into an honor play with fedudalizing thematics. The kingdom of Crete is in a state of disorder and unrest emanates from the figure of the King, Minos, who is plagued by an insatiable rage provoked by the death of his son at the hands of the Athenians. The feudal ideal

[42] Although a portion of this play was not written by Sor Juana herself, the majority of the text, including the resolution of the action, is hers. This discussion will not pause to examine the stylistic differences between Sor Juana and Guevera's portions of the text, but will instead foucs on the productive logic of the text as a whole. The fact that the productive logic remains quite uniform throughout the text, in spite of the fact that two authors contributed to its content and structure, is also indicative of the historical ideological norms that permeate the literature of the period.

[43] Even in spite of the fact that courtly love and lyric poetry continue to appear in this context, it must be noted that the souls capable of expressing themselves in this form are always and exclusively members of the noble class; in other words, the noblest expression of love remains grounded in noble substance, a reality attested to in the constant contrast between the idealized expressions of affection between the noble characters and the earthier interchanges made between the servants.

state of stasis/rest cannot be achieved as long as the King remains agitated. Ever since the death of the Prince, the King has made a regular practice of sacrificing Athenians to the Minotaur that inhabits the Labyrinth of Crete. These sacrifices, however, have not quenched the King's thirst for vengeance, and he is now determined to satisfy his desire to shed blood by sacrificing the Prince of Athens, Teseo, to the Minotaur. It is the King's hope that upon making a sacrifice of equal status—a prince for a prince—he will finally be able to ease his rage. As the King himself observes: "pues el ofendido, sólo cuando se venga descansa" (Juana, "Amor" 215). His daughters and servants are weary of the King's rage but doubtful that any sacrifice will appease him and they question the wisdom of his prolonged rage (232). When Teseo presents himself humbly and defenseless before the King and begs him to show mercy by granting him a pardon and thus ending the conflict between Athens and Crete, Minos is unwilling and affirms his resolve to sacrifice Teseo:

> Admirado me ha dejado,
> mas no me podrá ablandar;
> haz, Tebandro, ejecutar
> lo que te tengo mandado. (230)

Teseo's ambassador is furious with the King's decision and both of the King's daughters, Ariadna and Fedra, have become captivated by the Prince and also desire to spare his life.

In the following quote, the Athenian Ambassador defends his Lord begging the King to pardon Teseo. The Ambassador points out that it would seem that the King is obligated to pardon the Prince in this case, but the King remains obstinate. The following quote is helpful for establishing the still feudalizing logic of the play as it condenses the logic not only of the feudal duel, but also that of the feudal pardon and the notion of indebtedness that informed the relationship of servants to Lords. The Ambassador describes Teseo's act of submission as he tries to reason with the King:

> y él, sin hacer resistencia,
> fió de vuestra clemencia
> lo que pudo en su valor.
> Pues si en armas se pusiera,

¿quién dudará que constantes
muriéramos todos, antes
que el Príncipe se rindiera?
  Pero si tan comedida
su atención, quiso mostrar
que estima en más conservar
la palabra que la vida,
  ¿por qué por una venganza,
quiere Vuestra Majestad
pagar con una crueldad,
debiendo una confianza?
  Perdón os pido postrado,
Señor, pues si perdonáis,
con perdonarle, quedáis
más noblemente vengado;
  y no sin satisfacción,
porque antes, la tendréis doble,
que no hay para un hombre noble
castigo, como el perdón;
  pues (de su error convencido)
vive siempre avergonzado
de verse beneficiado
de aquel a quien ha ofendido. (231)

In a feudal duel equals faced one another to fight when offended honor had to be avenged, and chivalrous literature makes clear the notion that victory over an enemy was a sign of God's favor and justice restored. A fight to the death was not the only option for resolution and restoration of honor, however, as the offended also had the option to pardon his offender, especially in cases where (as in the play) the offender surrenders himself, admits fault and asks for mercy. Instead of engaging the King of Crete in further battle and provoking further

bloodshed, the Prince has decided to surrender to the King in order to appease his anger and put an end to the perpetual sacrifice of Athenians to the Minotaur, thus restoring the two kingdoms to a state of rest/peace. In this situation, the King is obliged to accept Teseo's surrender which is equivalent to a victory in battle. Teseo acknowledges the King's offense, and his submission to the King is a display of his indebtedness. Only a bloodthirsty King would insist upon spilling the blood of an unarmed and prostrate rival, as the above passage makes clear. Here, the text makes a critique of the King of Crete, portraying him as unjust and as the source of the chaos and suffering that plague the two kingdoms. The King is not behaving in a kingly manner and the restoration of peace and stasis will have to be achieved by other means, or as the Ambassador suggests, the violence will continue and the two kingdoms will simply destroy one another.

> ¿Con el Príncipe y conmigo
> se ha de usar tal tiranía?
> ¡Mal haya aquel que confía
> en piedad del enemigo!
> [...]
> Mas, vive Dios!, Rey injusto,
> que pues eres su homicida,
> has de pagar con la vida
> haber tenido este gusto. (233)

The feudal logic of the play is manifest not only in the problem that must be resolved, in the fact that honor and peace must be restored, but also in the notion of service that is embodied especially in the figure of Teseo.

The comparison made throughout the play between the King and Teseo is stark, and Teseo's example often recalls that of Christ. The action of surrendering oneself and begging for mercy at the feet of one's Lord (and/or rival) is analogous to the relationship of the sinner (who acknowledges his sin) with respect to Christ, knowing he has sinned and knowing he is unworthy of the pardon he receives. In spite of the fact that in *Amor es más laberinto* Teseo surrenders himself to the King—in the apparent role of the sinner—, his action also allegorizes

that of Christ surrendering himself to Pontius Pilot, the judge who would ultimately authorize his crucifixion. Teseo is revealed to be more Christlike in his actions than the King, and his character echoes the image of an unresisting lamb led to undeserved slaughter. Accordingly, the play works consistently toward the restoration of Teseo to his rightful place.

The King and Teseo are also contrasted in their tendencies toward activity and inactivity. From the first scene, the King is portrayed in a frenzied state, and Teseo, by way of contrast, is full of repose, slow to anger and humbly accepting of his fate even though it is unjust. Unlike Teseo, the King is not willing to accept his lot, and as a result his reason is clouded and he becomes the embodiment of unrest in the play. In the following passage, King Minos describes his own tormented state:

> tan crecido es el golfo de mis penas,
> que en ondas de congojas fluctuando,
> mi triste vida miro zozobrando
> en un mar de tormentos repetido,
> donde estoy de congojas sumergido. (255)

The above passage includes words such as "fluctuando" and "zozobrando" that indicate disruptive motion. In the same way, "golfo," "ondas," "mar de tormentos" and "estoy de congojas sumergido" evoke the image of rough waters. This passage reveals a feudal logic that understands movement/agitation as a negative state, privileging the notion of rest as the preferred and natural state of things, a logic that corresponds to a system marked by a fixed social hierarchy. As Rodríguez explains, "The cosmos specific to feudal organicism pre-supposed a notion of "movement" that, in all respects, was deeply rooted in feudal logic. […] According to this logic, movement was the most visible sign of corruption peculiar to the sublunary world" (*Theory* 166). In other words, movement was understood in terms of finality, always a movement of a substance toward its natural place. Rodríguez describes the situation as follows:

> Now if proper place 'is' the truth of each individual and each thing, *repose* (or the tendency toward repose, when the proper place has been lost) is the ultimate form of stasis within feudalizing ideological systematics as whole. Accordingly, feudal

organicism will necessarily view repose as an ideal state. (This applies both to individuals and to 'things,' and of course both to 'serfs' and to 'nobles' and 'lords.' Conversely, it will view movement, which basically involves a change of place, as a form of violence and, as such, requiring explanation […] The result is an opposition between *natural movement*, conceived as a tendency whereby men or things gravitate toward their substantial place […] and movement of any other kind, which necessarily had to be considered as *violent* movement. (166)

In the play, the King's movement is violent and threatening to the organic body, thus requiring intervention to restore order. Minos is out of control and in perpetual motion, driven by his desire for vengeance. His very substance has been altered, and although he seems to acknowledge the fact that his present condition is objectionable, he is unable to be at rest:

¡Tebandro, cuánta
fuera mi dicha, si aliviar pudiera
esta batalla de mi enojo fiera!
[…]
De cólera en mi enojo no sosiego;
todo soy iras, todo rayos. (Juana, "Amor" 256-7)

The feudalizing preference for stasis serves to legitimize and maintain the social hierarchy with each in his place. In *Amor es más laberinto*, this logic necessitates the restoration of individuals to their rightful place as it works, at the level of the ideological unconscious, against the notion of social mobility. Thus, the play also serves to dissuade individuals from desiring the station of another. Baco, the Prince of Tebas, reminds the other characters of the fact that not only is it unwise to aspire to gain another's place, but it is virtually impossible to achieve:

Nunca aspire a ser dichoso
el que nació desdichado,
que es desaire a las estrellas
querer violentar los Astros. (276)

Both *Amor es más laberinto* and *Los empeños de una casa* are plays that crescendo to a frenzy of action and then taper slowly toward the final stasis that is indicative of order having been

restored. The state of stasis that is achieved at the end of the play reinforces the idea that things and people tend toward their natural places, a truth that, as Baco states, is already written in the stars. In this way, both of Sor Juana's plays participate in the grounding in matter of the social hierarchy.

Disorder for the feudalizing ideological matrix is always related to the notion of the fall of man into original sin: "The fact that things "move" is simply a sign of their need for "death," that is, that they bear within them the weight of original sin" (Rodíguez, *Theory* 166). According to this logic, disorder in the text often takes the form of a descent from a higher to a baser nature. This is also the case with respect to King Minos and the feudal adaptation of the story of the Minotaur in *Amor es más laberinto*. It is important to note again that the King does not choose to engage Teseo directly in battle as equals as a true noble should, but instead decides to sacrifice him to a beast, the Minotaur. The King himself describes the form his vengeance will take inside the Labyrinth:

> En esta del horror caverna obscura
> mi venganza insaciable hallar procura
> modo con que templar el dolor fiero
> del tormento mayor, del más severo
> linaje de pesar y alevosía
> que pudo fabricar la tiranía. (Juana, "Amor" 255)

The King has converted the Minotaur into an instrument of vengeance to be used in order to defend his honor, but in doing so, he himself has lost his own honor, not only because of his insatiable thirst for blood but also because it is ignoble not to face one's enemy directly. The figure of the Minotaur, half bull and half man, functions in the play as a substantial sign that allegorizes the figure of the King himself and the fact that his nature has been corrupted and that he has fallen from his natural place in the feudal hierarchy. The Minotaur is the materialized form of the King's rage and present lack of reason and in this sense, an extension of the King himself who has succumbed to a baser animal instinct evidenced in his bloodlust. The constant repetition in the play of the word "insaciable" to characterize the King's current state and the Minotaur's nature gives further evidence of the allegorical sign embodied in the

figure of the Minotaur. The King, like the Minotaur, now lives in darkness instead of light and is characterized by a lack of reason, constant unrest and a thirst for blood. As Sor Juana explains in *La Respuesta*, it is man's capacity for reason/understanding that determines his specific place in the natural order of things: "No por otra razón es el ángel más que el hombre que porque entiende más: no es otro el exceso que el hombre hace al bruto, sino sólo entender" (Juana, "Respuesta" 455). The King/Minotaur that appears in Sor Juana's play recalls the Minotaur that appears in Dante's *Inferno* as a beast condemned for its violent nature. The King in Sor Juana's version of the story risks becoming this same kind of eternally disfigured and damned beast if he is not restored to reason and able finally to correct his violent behavior. As might be expected, the remedy for the situation will come from two other characters who also represent an extension of the King and his noble substance—his daughters—, but we shall return to this question presently.

In *Amor es más laberinto*, King Minos is characterized by and critiqued for his unrighteous anger that produces destabilizing motion. As Rodríguez has noted, a critique of this kind of Machiavellian egoism appears in many texts of the transition given that the pursuit of individual interests was understood by the feudal matrix as dangerous to the corporeal structure of society (*Theory* 44). The King, however, is not the only character in the play who has fallen into a baser state of insatiable unrest and displays erratic behavior. Just as there was a distinction to be made in the feudal ideological matrix between righteous anger and unrighteous rage, there was also a distinction to be made between *amor cuerdo* (wise love) and *amor loco* (crazy love). In the same way that the unrighteous and overzealous rage of the King produces unrest that disturbs the natural order, the *amor loco* of his daughter, Ariadna, propels her into motion and out of her natural place for a time. Both the King and Ariadna display unfettered egoism, the King in his rage and Ariadna in her amorous pursuits. The King endangers the whole kingdom with his belligerence, and as a result his people are constantly threatened by war with Athens. Ariadna is also insatiable, but with respect to love. She has love, but when she sees Teseo she is propelled into movement and abandons her rightful place with Baco in pursuit of further conquest. Ariadna threatens the order of the corporate body by her attempt to win a prince who does not return her love. At the same time and somewhat

paradoxically however, it is her obedience to her particular nature that in the end will save Teseo. Even in spite of the sinful nature that entails disruptive movement, her noble substance also works in the opposite direction tending toward its noble place and nobler comport as well.

There is a certain parallel structure that can be traced throughout the play both in the parallel plot structure and in the contrasts drawn between the characters. In each of the two plots—the King's pursuit of vengeance and Ariadna's pursuit of amorous conquest—, characters who cannot be contented provoke the movement and thus the disorder that drives the action of the play. The active figures of the King and Ariadna are contrasted with the more static, and therefore nobler, Teseo and Fedra. Both the King and Ariadna are more Machiavellian and defined by appetite while Teseo and Fedra are earnest yet more paused in their approach to resolving complicated situations. Both of the noble daughters of the King are drawn to the Prince as he is a worthy match; blood calls to blood, and therefore there is a natural affinity between them (Juana, "Amor" 236). Ariadna, however, is too bold, too active, too scheming, and is constantly contrasted with her more reserved sister, Fedra. Fedra's love for Teseo is immediate, but unlike her sister, she is unwilling to state plainly her affection for Teseo as this would not be worthy of her rank/noble substance (239, 324). Although each of the four main characters meets with an agreeable fate in the end, the King and Ariadna are deterred from their course of action and put back in their place while Teseo and Fedra are rewarded for their humility and patience; the quality of their substance is revealed in their inevitable gravitation toward one another.

In spite of the fact that the more animist theme of courtly love, as expressed in the lyric communication between twin souls, is patent in Sor Juana's text, it is the natural (substantialist) order of things that is more plainly asserted. That the natural order of things must be respected is a truth set forth in an example that Teseo provides when asked to give an account of his deeds. In the following passage, the Prince of Athens describes how he was able to gain control over his desires and thus conquer and restrain himself. His greatest victory was to respect the will of a woman who did not reciprocate his love for her:

Pero la mayor victoria
fue, Señor, que amante tierno

de la belleza de Elena,
la robé: no estuve en esto
el valor (aunque el roblarla
me costó infinitos riesgos),
sino en que, cuando ya estaban
a mi voluntad sujetos
el premio de su hermosura
y el logro de mis deseos,
de sus lágrimas movido
y obligado de sus ruegos
la volví a restituír
a su Patria y a su deudos,
dejando a mi amor llorando
y a mi valor consiguiendo
la más difícil vitoria,
que fue vencerme a mí mesmo. (229)

Teseo explains that he was able to conquer himself upon finally submitting to the will of Elena. His respect for Elena's wishes shouldn't be confused, however, with the more contempoary kind of defense of the individual subject found in later texts such as *El sí de las niñas* by Moratín. Far from legitimizing the notion of *choice*, at the heart of Teseo's respect for women is his respect for *the natural order of things*. The above passage serves to demonstrate that Teseo, unlike the King of Crete, takes care to avoid creating or forcing disorder. In restoring Elena to her homeland, Teseo restored her to her rightful place and in doing so he remained true to his own noble substance.

Standing in contrast to Teseo, Ariadna is willing to provoke disorder. Just as the King's fallen state is allegorized in the figure of the Minotaur, Ariadna's name is a sign that allegorizes both her nature and the role she is to play in the action of *Amor es más laberinto*. Ariadna's name references the spider, and she is like a spider in her industriousness. She is the active character in the play that provides the thread that ultimately leads Teseo out of the Labyrinth

and to safety (245). The paradox, from the perspective of the bourgeois ideological matrix, is that although Ariadna's actions are necessary to save Teseo, she is not cast as the ideal woman nor the heroin in the play; in fact, and as we have already mentioned above, the characters who are most richly rewarded are those who are least active, least scheming and least industrious. What is clear is that in a still feudalizing text such as *Amor es más laberinto*, the individual is not yet contemplated as the source of the action, in other words, as the protagonist according to bourgeois logic. Individuals are free to obey or disobey the order of things, but they are also ultimately dominated by the substantialist tendency of things (and people) to gravitate toward their rightful places[44]. The characters who are most respectful of this truth are those who are least active, hence their reward. Ariadna, like the King, must be contemplated as a figure whose movement represents disorder; the thread she gives Teseo is part of a larger web, or scheme, that she weaves in hopes of capturing Teseo for herself. Although she saves Teseo, she also intends to trap him and obligate him to marry her. In the process she abandons Baco, her noble and loyal Prince, and thus abandons her rightful station. Even in a lighthearted *comedia* where the disorder of things provokes more laughter than apprehension in the audience (presumably because the action is hyperbolic and also because the audience already knows that order will eventually be restored), the feudalizing logic of the action and resolution is apparent. The lesson is clear; disorder and confusion are inevitable in a fallen world, but taking matters into one's own hands generally serves to aggravate the

[44] In any given system, the reality of contradiction (or class struggle) necessitates the development of key ideological categories as well as secondary ideological notions and narratives that serve to account for what are supposedly the exceptions to the rule. For bourgeois ideology, for example, the notions of individual freedom and social mobility are key. Most individuals, however, do not enjoy the degree of social mobility that capitalism promises them, at which point the capitalist system is obligated, at the ideological level, to somehow account for this reality and hem in all such possibilities. Thus, alongside the proliferation of popular portrayals of individuals who have worked hard and risen to great success, there is also a counter narrative that lauds the individual who is loyal to his or her origin and rejects the pursuit of bigger and better things in favor of staying put, right where he or she belongs. In both narratives, however, the notion of choice is often operative and individuals are generally portrayed as freely choosing their paths. The contradictory situation was the same for feudalizing ideology, a fact that can be observed in various ways, including in the notion of fate, or destiny. Although there was a natural order and things and people ostensibly tended toward their places in this order, there were of course many moments when this was not in fact the case. Oftentimes order was not restored and/or the victor in a given contest was not the more honorable party. In such situations, the notion of fate (along with the fallen state of the world) could explain the perceived absence of divine justice. Whether people tended toward their natural places or met with seemingly undeserved calamity, what was always clear was that one's destiny was already written and that true protagonism was located beyond the level of the individual. Just as no one could choose his or her station in life, no one could choose his or her fate.

situation. The characters that show true wisdom are those who patiently wait for order to be restored and for fate to run its course. To resist the pre-inscribed order of things is both disruptive and futile.

Contemporary criticism doesn't offer any extended analysis of the feudalizing ideology that characterizes Sor Juana's comedies, preferring again to focus on her work as transcending its moment. Susana Hernández Araico's introduction to Sor Juana's comedia, *Los empeños de una casa*, begins by describing the play as "transgressive," an effort at "Desconstructing the comic genre," and a "comic plot" that "contradicts the conventional values on which the comedia normally hinges" (xxx, xxiii). Her initial descriptions blatantly contradict, however, her own conclusion that in the end it is "the prevailing force of wise love" that wins against the threatening force of crazy love (xxix), a statement that correctly describes both of the plays in question but one that would also imply their adherence to a less than transgressive logic. While conceding a certain filial relationship between the theatrical production of Sor Juana and her Iberian predecessors, namely Calderón, critics such as Hernández Araico whose approach insists upon the subversive nature of Sor Juana's work are unwilling to consider the suggestion that Sor Juana's texts might reproduce messages in many ways similar to even more conservative models. The contradiction between a nascent bourgeois ideology that privileges movement over stasis and the feudalizing ideology that still attempts to ground all things in matter is present in each of the plays in question, but to label them as "transgressive" is to misunderstand the arc that each traces from disorder to order, from frantic motion to a state of peace and rest. Frenzied movement takes center stage in both of Sor Juana's plays (indicative of the impact of bourgeois ideology), but in spite of the delight that can be taken in the flurry of humorous events, movement is still primarily understood here as disorder/chaos/threat as each play legitimizes the notion of a natural hierarchy of substances tending toward their natural places. While Hernández Araico correctly observes that "the inactive, contemplative lovers can be legitimately reunited" (xxix) and that the Machiavellian drive of certain characters is cast in a negative light, she is ultimately unable to comprehend the productive logic of the text, as is evinced in the following statement: "She [Sor Juana] isolates her central figures from the Machiavellian exploits of other characters and turns inactivity into a virtue, a rather

dangerous strategy for dramatic performance" (xxx). The feudalizing logic that privileges stasis over movement and thus understands inactivity as virtuous does not figure in such an analysis.

As can be observed at the end of the play, movement must eventually give way to stasis and the restoration of individuals to their rightful places. Teseo is restored to his throne and the King of Crete is restored to reason and a state of peace. Ariadna is restored to her original love for Baco when her frenzied pursuit of amorous conquest is curtailed. Fedra is revealed as the more noble and virtuous of the two sisters, as the one who obeys the laws of decorum that govern a woman's place, and she is ultimately rewarded by her union with Teseo. In the end, everyone benefits from the tendency of things to gravitate toward natural/rightful places and also from the fact that even base intentions can be used for good, a notion familiar to the feudal matrix and one that reinforces the omniscient perspective and hand of God.

The conflict between the King and Teseo allegorizes various Biblical examples, as we have seen above. At the end of the play, there are echoes of the story of Joseph found in Genesis as Teseo has much in common with this Biblical figure. As the story goes, Joseph, the favorite son of Jacob, was unjustly sold into slavery by his jealous brothers but then rose to become the second in command over Egypt and was eventually reunited with his family, saving them from famine and death. Upon being reunited with his family Joseph explains to them: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive" (King James Bible (Cambridge Ed.), citation*). Just as in the story of Joseph the evil impulses of his brothers are ultimately used for the good of all, so it is with the King's rage and his daughter's crazy, selfish love in Sor Juana's play. Teseo, like Joseph, recognizes the good that has come from misplaced appetites; the kingdoms have been restored to peace and the happy union of Teseo and Fedra is accomplished. In order to spare Ariadna the consequences that revealing her actions might provoke, Teseo credits both of the *infantas*, and by extension, even the King himself with saving him from the Labyrinth, and it is here where the central role attributed to *substance* in the resolution of the action can be observed.

When Teseo reveals himself in the final scene all are stunned to see him alive, including his army general, Licas. The following passage is the exchange that ensues:

LICAS

¡Tan grande dicha
llego a ver, Señor! ¿Pues cómo
te hallo vivo?

TESEO
Compasivas
me libraron las infantas.
[…]

LICAS
Luego ¿no fue el Rey el que
te perdonó?

TESEO
Fue su hija,
que es lo mismo, pues él dio
el sér a quien me dio vida; (Juana, "Amor" 348-9)

When Teseo states that the pardon he received from the King's daughter(s) is the same as a pardon bestowed by the King himself, a feudalizing notion of substance is at work. The King is present in his daughters; because they share his blood, their substance is also his substance. His daughters' impulse to save Teseo from the death the King intended for him was representative of the wisdom, virtue and nobility embodied in the royal family as a whole, in the King's line. Both daughters recognized that Teseo did not deserve to die in the Labyrinth. The daughters judged Teseo the way that the King himself should have, had he not been blinded by his state of rage over the loss of his son.

And yet, the overarching feudalizing logic of the text is not entirely integral. While the King is eventually restored to reason and noble and virtuous comport, it is significant that the figure of the King does not set the highest example or represent the ultimate authority in the text. In spite of the insistence in the final scene upon *substance* and the wisdom ultimately

embodied in noble substance, the fissures in the feudal system are also very visible here given the fact that a noble birth does not necessarily guarantee noble deeds. In spite of the fact that Teseo, the most exemplary noble, is ultimately restored to his place, the feudal notion that "blood will out", or the idea that one's pedigree is determinant, is partially supplanted in Sor Juana's *comedias* by the category of *nature.* Although both the King and Teseo are nobles, Teseo sets the true example as his noble birth is augmented by a steadfast virtue and valor absent in the figure of King Minos. The shift from a substantialist emphasis on *blood* to a substantialist emphasis on *nature* is made plain in the figure of Teseo in the account of his *hazañas* (deeds) given at the behest of King Minos early in the play. The next few pages examine Teseo's speech that condenses the logic involved in the shift from blood to nature. Teseo begins his discourse by comparing the worth of a title or one's birthright to the worth of one's individual name:

> Yo (aunque ya sabes quién soy)
> referir de nuevo quiero
> mi nombre, por si el olvido
> le sepulta, que es muy cierto
> que nadie conoce al que
> ve en baja fortuna puesto.
> Yo, pues, el Príncipe soy,
> que de Atenas heredero,
> antes pago sus pensiones
> que gozo de sus imperios.
> Poco te he dicho en decir
> que soy príncipe, pues pienso
> que es más que decir monarca
> decirte que soy Teseo. (224-5)

That Teseo emphasizes his specific name over the more generic title of monarch is significant. In Sor Juana's play in general and according to Teseo, a noble birth/title is no guarantee for noble behavior. His specific name is one that can be associated with specific deeds and he

values these more. The contrast between the feudal emphasis on lineage and the new emphasis on deeds or individual merit begins to take shape in the text. Teseo continues his argument explaining:

> Y con razón, pues haber
> nacido príncipe excelso,
> se lo deberá a la sangre
> y no a mis merecimientos;
> y no he de estimar yo más
> (aun siendo mi padre mesmo)
> aquello que debo a otro
> que no lo que a mí me debo.
> Que entre ser príncipe y ser
> soldado, aunque a todos menos
> les parezca lo segundo,
> a lo segundo me atengo;
> que de un valiente soldado
> puede hacerse un rey supremo,
> y de un rey (por serlo) no
> hacerse un soldado bueno. (224-5)

In the above portion of the passage Teseo weighs the value of his *sangre* (blood) against that of his *merecimientos* (merits) and in this comparison the ideological contradictions of the period are vividly revealed. Teseo is the son of his father and therefore, a prince, but he is also the son of his own deeds and therefore a valiant soldier and one *worthy* to be a king. As Read explains in his article, "Ideologies of the Spanish Transition Revisited," where he discusses the work of the 16th century scholar Juan Huarte de San Juan, during the Transition there arose a debate regarding "what constitutes true nobility" (326). Without questioning the legitimacy of a stratified society complete with a noble class, Huarte is an example of a scholar who concluded in contrast to a more purely linage-based thinking that *deeds* were the true origin of nobility and not the other way

around. Read quotes the following passage from Huarte's *Examen de los ingenios* where noble titles are traced back to deeds and the import of lineage is scrutinized:

> Porque todas cuantas buenas noblezas ha habido en el mundo y habrá, han nacido, y nacerán, de peones y hombres particulares, los cuales con el valor de su persona hicieron tales hazañas que merecieron para sí y para sus descendientes título de hijosdealgo, caballeros, nobles, Condes, Marqueses, Duques y Reyes. Verdad es que hay algunos tan ignorantes y faltos de consideración, que no admiten que su nobleza tuvo principio, sino que es eterna, y convertida en sangre, no por merced del Rey particular, sino por creación sobrenatural y divina (*Examen*, 272). (Read, "Ideologies" 326)

Nowhere does Sor Juana interrogate the notion of lineage with quite the same force as Huarte, but the following portion of Teseo's speech does reproduce much of the argument found in Huarte's *Examen* registering a similar shift from an emphasis on blood to an emphasis on a substantial nature:

> Lo cual consiste, Señor,
> si a buena luz lo atendemos,
> en que no puede adquirirse
> el valor, como los reinos.
> Pruébase aquesta verdad,
> con decir que los primeros
> que impusieron en el mundo
> dominio, fueron los hechos,
> pues siendo todos los hombres
> iguales, no hubiera medio
> que pudiera introducir
> la desigualdad que vemos,
> como entre rey y vasallo,
> como entre noble y plebeyo.
> Porque pensar que por sí
> los hombres se sometieron

a llevar ajeno yugo
y a sufrir extraño freno,
si hay causas para pensarlo
no hay razón para creerlo;
porque como nació el hombre
naturalmente propenso
a mandar, sólo forzado
se reduce a estar sujeto
y haber de vivir en un
voluntario cautiverio
ni el cuerdo lo necesita
ni quiere sufrirlo el necio:
aquél, porque en su cordura
halla de vivir preceptos,
y aquéste, porque le tiene
su necedad satisfecho;
pues no verás ignorante,
en quien humor soberbio
no llene de presunción
los vacíos del talento.
De donde infiero, que sólo
fue poderoso el esfuerzo
a diferenciar los hombres,
que tan iguales nacieron,
con tan grande distinción
como hacer, siendo unos mesmos
que unos sirvan como esclavos
y otros manden como dueños. (Juana, “Amor” 224-5)

Teseo's character clearly rehearses Huarte's conclusions regarding the origin of true nobility in one's deeds. As Read explains, however, it is important to understand that in Huarte it is still not "individual effort or willpower but the force of a natural faculty" that leads to the display of valor/merit ("Ideologies" 327); in other words, one's *substance* is still determinate. The same is true in Sor Juana's texts with the added caveat that one's particular nature is always God-given. Sor Juana, unlike Huarte, will always double back to state the God-given nature of things so that even when her text registers the shift from blood to nature, this nature will always be understood as having connection to divine will. Thus Teseo confirms at the end of the passage, even as he expresses his preference for valor over birthright, that he is in fact indebted to Heaven for both his birthright and his valor:

> Luego no será altivez
> que, cuando le debo al Cielo,
> de nacimiento y valor
> tan conformes privilegios,
> me precie de mi valor
> más que de mi nacimiento. (Juana, "Amor" 224-5)

Sor Juana's texts take up the task of suturing the contradictions of the transition, one of these being the contradiction that persisted between the feudal category of blood and the animist notion of deeds or personal merit as the basis for one's social situation. Given that hers was a moment during which a dominant Aristotelianism worked to ground everything in matter, her texts exhibit this same tendency. In *Amor es más laberinto*, substance still weighs heavy, and the same is true for the rest of Sor Juana's ideological production; as we saw in her *Respuesta*, the crux of her self-defense was to insist that she only ever behaved in accordance with her true and God-given nature. When it comes to Sor Juana's work we are not confronting a purely substantialist text anymore, a fact that is clear given the relative inattention paid to the category of blood/lineage. At the same time, however, like Huarte, she is still concerned to discover and defend natures derived from particular combinations of substance; in other words, nature was still understood as a bodily reality in the same way that one's lineage was a bodily reality. Even though texts such as those produced by Huarte and Sor Juana worked to

substantialize nature—a feudalizing ideological gesture to be sure—the fact remained that the category of *nature* was much more abstract than the category of *blood*, a reality that ultimately served to bolster the flexibility of the social hierarchy. *Blood* was plainly identifiable as a substance while *nature*, although still held to be substantial and understood as a product of the four humors, was clearly much less localizable as an actual substance; as blood gave way to nature, new possibilities for social mobility were inevitably created.

3.2 Honor becomes a private matter

Along with the important emphasis on nature that can be found in Sor Juana's work, another observable indicator of the continued impact of bourgeois ideology is the degree to which the public/private split is operative in the ideological production of the moment. For Rodríguez this point cannot be emphasized enough:

> The deciding structure is, then, the private/public dialectic, to which the nobility must adapt in spite of its own dominance […] To be more precise, since the bourgeoisie and nobility do not simply represent two social groups but, more importantly, two modes of production (feudalism/capitalism) and consequently two types of social relations, each of them will try to impose and develop its own distinctive ideological matrix in the interior of the private/public function. With one radical difference: this functional process is tendentially favorable to bourgeois relations […] The nobility, we are arguing, cannot fully develop its own epistemology (its own relations) within a private-public function that is basically anti-feudal. (*Theory* 53-54)

The case of the theater is particularly helpful for examining the contradictions in question, and Sor Juana's plays are no exception to this rule. Like so many other theatrical pieces produced during the transition, the structure of her plays as well as the outcomes for her characters are determined according to the logic of the public/private split even in spite of the fact that her plays also take part to a certain degree in what Rodríguez identifies as the "strategy of unity" that characterized the Spanish stage as a dominant feudalizing ideology that attempted to "'ignore' the private/public dichotomy" and "recuperate the feudal 'unity'" (50). In Sor Juana's

plays a strategy of unity is in evidence; in both *Amor es más laberinto* and *Los empeños de una casa* things move from a state of disorder to order, from frenzied motion to a state of calm, or rest. After an initial whirlwind of confusion set in motion by secret conversations, misleading disguises and jealousy or anger provoked, without fail, individuals still tend to gravitate toward their natural and rightful places, and eventually stasis, honor and hierarchy are restored. As we have seen, this gesture in Sor Juana is clearly a feudalizing one, but as Rodríguez explains, such dramas also serve to illustrate "the extent to which the old transparency has been lost", or in other words, the extent to which the public/private split has been instituted (50). Sor Juana's plays register one kind of attempt to suture the contradictions that arise when the feudal hierarchy is forced to reiterate itself within the logic of the public/private dichotomy. Whereas "in general there was no doubt as to who was a noble under feudalism", the Spanish stage during the transition is populated by individuals whose identity and station has been confused and therefore, must be restored; in this way, the stage represented a reality analogous to the political situation according to the perspective of a dominant feudalizing ideology (50).

> It will be the seigneurial themes of honor and blood that will dominate the 'stage,' because, as we explained, the stage is the 'representation' of politics, and this is a sphere in which the nobility dominates. But it dominates in 'molds' that are not its own, in the strictest sense: it dominates the theatrical thematics, but it does not control the basic epistemology. (47-8)

A few key observations regarding *Los empeños de una casa* are in order given that this particular play is one of the places where the impact of the public/private split is most visible in Sor Juana's literary production. As is well documented, "Sor Juana's title, *Los empeños de una casa*, originates in Calderón's own *Casa con dos puertas"* and is effectively an adaptation of the same plot structure (Hernández Araico xxiv). A short summary of each of these plays reveals their similar structure as well as the complications that Sor Juana's version inserts into the plot.

In Calderón's version of the story in *Casa con dos puertas mala es de guardar* Don Félix is the guardian of his sister, Marcela. Don Félix is in love with his sister's friend, Laura, and is interested in pursuing her. A second love plot is introduced when Lisardo, a friend of Don Félix comes to stay, and Don Félix decides to hide his sister, Marcela, locking her in a secret room

throughout the visit. Inevitably, Marcela observes Lisardo from a distance, falls in love with him and decides to arrange for their mutual encounter, an event made possible by the fact that the room she is supposedly locked inside has a second door to which her servant has a key. Marcela also makes use of her friend Laura's house, which also has two doors, in order to meet with Lisardo, but entanglements ensue when Laura's father enters and discovers Lisardo in his daughter's chambers. Eventually, identities are revealed and the anger of the father and brother figures is quenched when qualified suitors step forward to accept marriage with each of the two women whose honor has been placed in doubt by the events in the play. The play ends with a double marriage that restores honor to both houses.

In Sor Juana's adaptation of the story, Don Pedro and Doña Ana are brother and sister, and like Marcela in Calderón's version, they are the more meddling characters. Moreover, the original plot is further complicated by the addition of an extra male character. At the start of the play, Doña Ana's character catches the audience up on what has already occurred. The brother-sister pair has moved from Madrid to Toledo where they both fall in love. For Doña Ana, however, this is the second time she has become smitten, and she abandons her original liaison with Don Juan in order to pursue Don Carlos. Don Carlos, however, is in love with Doña Leonor, who is also in love with him and plans to marry him. They are the nobler characters in the story whose patience and steadfastness is eventually rewarded just as in the examples in *Amor es más laberinto*. The action revolves around the plotting and scheming of the brother-sister pair, Don Pedro and Doña Ana, as they each attempt to win the love of (or at least force marriage with) Doña Leonor and Don Carlos, respectively. In the end, the more virtuous pair, Doña Leonor and Don Carlos, is reunited, and Doña Ana is obligated to settle for her original suitor, Don Juan. Don Pedro ends up alone after his attempt to win Leonor fails and he is doubly humiliated by the fact that at the peak of the confusion he was actually wooing Chestnut, Don Carlos' servant, dressed in Doña Leonor's clothing.

Upon comparing the two plays, Sor Juana's indebtedness to Calderón's version is clear, but at the same time, there are very important differences to be noted. Contemporary criticism has been concerned to discover differences between the two playwrights and has generally gone about this task in two main ways, first by weighing the creative merits and/or

originality of the two plays and then by contrasting Calderón's conservativism with Sor Juana's purported subversive tendencies. While there are important ideological differences to be discussed when comparing Sor Juana's work to that of Calderón, the problem traced throughout this analysis still remains; the tendency to modernize Sor Juana and imbue her work with contemporary values is often at the heart of such comparisons. Hernández Araico insists in various places on Sor Juana's superiority to Calderón as well as upon their differences, but without ever really qualifying such statements. The contrast with Calderón seems to serve the critic as a springboard into her discussion of Sor Juan's subversively progressive tendencies. Hernández Araico states in her introduction that:

> Many studies have noted en passant that Sor Juana surpasses Calderón's complicated comic format in *Los empeños* or that she transcends his aesthetic-ethical criteria of the honor code (Castañeda, 109, n. 8); very few have actually elaborated on the distinctive innovations of Sor Juana's play. (xxii)

The implication is, of course, that Hernández Araico will herself explore Sor Juana's distinctive innovations. Like many of the critics treated in earlier chapters, however, Hernández Araico has difficulty defending with strong examples from *Los empeños de una casa* her thesis regarding the ingenuity and insubordinance of Sor Juana's thinking. More than a literary analysis of the play, Hernández Araico creates in her critical introduction a portrait of Sor Juana with all of the familiar trappings where the nun is once again depicted as a woman ahead of her time. Like many others, she concludes that Sor Juana was forced to resort to a subversive and muted communication of her true self given that "a radical or revolutionary stance in any monarchy or aristocracy of the times would hardly have found favor within the power structure, nor would any text unequivocally critical of it receive official support to reach the stage or the printing press" (xxxi). Rather conveniently, the emphasis is once again placed on what Sor Juana was not able to say directly as the key to understanding her work. As might be expected, her poetry is recognized as her most essential work and her "secular comedies" are deemed more innovative than her more religious pieces (xxi). Sor Juana herself is described as "a very creative transmuter" of all of her peninsular influences (including Calderón) and as "a colonial female subject" working from within a "marginal milieu" (xxiii). Her work, including *Los*

empeños, is described as having subtly but constantly challenged the status quo even as "her literary-theatrical talent was exploited by church and viceregal court to praise its own power" (xxxi). Nowhere in the critic's arguments, however, is there a clear explanation of the key differences between Sor Juana and Calderón's writing given, the irony of course being that there is in fact a very legitimate comparison to be made. Not only is Sor Juana's play clearly indebted to Calderón's *Casa con dos puertas mala es de guardar*, a play with a plot structure in some ways very similar to that of *Los empeños de una casa*, but both are authors writing during the contradictory period of the transition. If Rodríguez is right in suggesting that this period was marked by the production of two literatures, or the production of two dissonant ideological matrices, then it follows that Sor Juana's and Calderón's bodies of work could be compared according to the way that each of these plays mediates the new reality. Of particular interest are the ways that each of these author's works produce the public/private split and the notion of honor.

To begin with, Calderón's play obeys the feudalizing "strategy of unity" described above by Rodríguez as his play "ignores" the public/private split as well as its corresponding interior/exterior split that has begun to produce certain more psychologizing effects in the works of other authors of the period. Neither the public/private split nor the interior/exterior split is as operative in Calderón's play as in Sor Juana's; Calderón's text is more strictly feudalizing while Sor Juana's play exhibits a more hybrid ideology. The ideological extraction of Calderón's text can be observed in the emphasis on blood and restoration of honor that drives the text. Once order is restored to the social hierarchy in *Casa don dos puertas,* the action is complete. From the perspective of a more modern sensitivity, Calderón's play ends too abruptly. Don Fabio, the father who is enraged at the possibility of the loss of family honor and prepared to kill his daughter (Laura) and her suitor, is appeased instantaneously when Don Félix offers to marry her. The same is true of Don Félix, who is the jealous and incensed brother of Marcela. His anger is also instantaneously quenched when Lisardo steps forward, confesses his love and asks for her hand in marriage. Swords are put away, marriages are made official immediately, and with very little in the way of romance, the action ends. For the contemporary reader, the expected pause for relishing in the happy ending is simply missing. Although it is

clear that the inevitable goal of the action of this *comedia* is to arrive at the marriage scene, it is also apparent that the play does not reproduce the emotion that corresponds to typical wedding scenes in more contemporary literature. Another logic is at work in Calderón's play, and one that is more concerned with the notion of "public" honor than with that of the formation of a nuclear family and the achievement of personal happiness.

A false woman should be named as such and punished immediately as the restoration of the honor of the family requires—a logic displayed in full force in Calderón's, *El médico de su honra* (*The Physician of his Honor)*. In the case of the comedy, on the other hand, marriage is the vehicle for restoration, thus the typical final scene often involving multiple marriages. It is important to understand the feudalizing logic of these endings in order to comprehend the apparent abruptness of the final scene. Although honor resides in the body of the woman, the woman depends entirely upon men to vouch for the fact that her honor is intact, first upon her father or brother, and then upon her would be spouse. When her father discovers her in the presence of a man outside of the family, his duty is to protect and cleanse the honor of his family, even if it means disowning or killing his own daughter and her suitor. At the very least, she must marry her suitor for honor to be restored. In such cases, the would-be spouse only needs to affirm his intent to marry the imperiled woman in order to restore her to honor. It is not, however, that a quick marriage makes up for or hides any sins committed; rather, the girl's father knows that an honorable nobleman would never knowingly agree to marry a dishonorable woman. In this way, the suitor's confidence in her virtue restores her father's confidence as well as the honor of her family. In plays like Calderón's, when a nobleman steps forward to defend a noblewoman by asking for her hand in marriage, the father (or brother) of the woman whose honor is in question can rest assured that her honor is intact, given that no nobleman who doubted her would submit to marry her. The request of the suitor vouches for her honor and thus restores it. For this reason, once this task is accomplished, the action of the play is over.

Calderón is commonly viewed as more conservative than Sor Juana and rightfully so as his texts do work more stridently toward the restoration of feudal relations. Still, it is important to keep in mind the subtlety of the differences involved. Although both authors generate

feudalizing texts that continue to legitimize the notion of a fixed social hierarchy, Calderón's texts are generally more concerned to reassert the primacy of the category of *blood* or *lineage* than are Sor Juana's. In Calderón's text the preservation of honor takes center stage, and women (and their bodies) are often at the heart of this question. Given that women's bodies are the locus of family honor and the place where purity (and pure lineages) must be preserved, access to their bodies must be limited and kept under observation. Since a feudalizing ideology in crisis mode dominates in Calderón's work, women are associated strongly with original sin and are presented as tending to behave in foolish ways, as creatures in need of constant guarding by their paternal counterparts. Frequently, the women themselves speak of their inherent weakness. In the following passage, Marcela tells Laura about her pursuit of Lisardo and describes herself as curious and prone to temptation like Eve:

> […] esta
> curiosidad, Laura, en mí,
> o este destino en mi estrella,
> despertaron un deseo
> de saber si el huésped era, como gallardo entendido,
> cosa que quizá no hiciera
> a no habérmelo vedado;
> que en fin la culpa primera
> de la primera mujer,
> esto nos dejó en herencia. (Calderón, *Mágico* 135)

Throughout the play, women are portrayed as the ultimate cause for dishonorable behavior. Lisardo, on the other hand, who is enticed into an amorous relationship with Marcela, is portrayed as an honorable man willing to set aside his own desires in order to honor his friendship with Don Félix. Men are generally more honorable than women. When Lisardo mistakenly suspects that he is also wooing the same woman as his friend, he prepares to leave explaining to his servant that the actions of a woman have caused his departure:

> En efecto, me destierran,
> antes de tiempo de Ocaña,

tramoyas de una mujer. (156)

Here again, the woman is portrayed as the guiltier party. In Calderón's play, the fault lies primarily with the active woman who contrives a plan and creates a disturbance. Laura, who is Marcela's friend, also describes her as foolish multiple times in the play (138-9, 149). Laura is the more honorable of the two women and tries to behave accordingly, but quickly finds herself entangled in Marcela's scheme to use a room in Laura's house in order to meet with Lisardo. Laura protests the arrangement, but ultimately agrees to help her friend:

De mala gana te sirvo
en esto.
[…]
(Ap.) ¡Oh, a qué de cosas se obliga
quien tiene una amiga necia! (138-9)

In Calderón's play, only women are described as foolish while in Sor Juana's play, by way of contrast, men and women share in the blame equally.

The prominence of the notion of blood in Calderón can be observed even in Marcela's request to her friend. Although Marcela asks Laura to lie about the reason for her (Laura's) movements and betray her father's trust by inviting Lisardo into her house, Marcela refers to her friend's action as a *fineza* or a good deed worthy of Laura's pedigree and evincing the bond between the women. It is important to note that *blood* and *friendship* are here intertwined:

[…] Esta
fineza has de hacer por mí,
pues es tan digna fineza
de tu sangre y mi amistad. (138)

While the similar noble status of the women evoked in this passage reinforces a feudal notion of loyalty, the audience would have also comprehended the foolishness involved in mixing the notion of the duties associated with one's blood with such errant behavior. Marcela clearly abuses the obligations of fidelity and service associated with feudal ideology by asking her friend to perform a service that implies jeopardizing honor. At the same time, the petition, as

foolish as it may be, is made possible because of the bond of noble friendship that exists between the two women.

When Marcela puts honor at risk, she puts blood at risk. The emphasis on the preservation of purity of blood/lineage that characterizes Calderón's text means that there is also a corresponding emphasis on the obligation to restore honor, and even through bloodshed, if necesary. Rodríguez describes the literature of the period as marked by "the thematization of seigneurial honor/blood" and Calderón's work in particular as representative of a transitional theater "inundated" by blood (*Theory* 55): "The staging of this whole brutal confluence can be observed in an exemplary manner in *The Physician of his Honor*, in which the 'doctor-husband' cleanses his honor—blood—by bleeding his wife to death. She is innocent, but suspect, and does not resist (55). Although the action is resolved without bloodshed in *Casa con dos puertas*, it is still possible to describe Calderón's work, here and elsewhere, as significantly bloodier than Sor Juana's in general, in that the theme of blood/honor is ever present. Even in a *comedia* like *Casa con dos puertas,* swords are brandished with the intent to defend honor at any cost.

The dishonorable behavior of Don Fabio's daughter, Laura, is discovered by her father when he is forced to return to his home earlier than expected because of an injury to his leg. On the first day of a trip he embarks upon with his servant, Lelio, Don Fabio falls off of his mare, and the pair are forced to turn back toward home:

> Es tan notable el dolor,
> Lelio, que no puedo más.
> […]
> y quise venir a pie
> este rato, por dejar,
> con ejercicio vencido
> el dolor de la caída,
> te confieso que en mi vida
> no me he visto tan rendido. (Calderón, *Mágico* 179)

Upon arriving at the house, Don Fabio hears swords clashing inside and discovers that other men have been in his home with his daughter while he was out, putting the honor of his family at risk. When the perpetrators escape through another door before he can see them, it is Don Fabio who exclaims the central lesson of the play expressed in the title as well:

¡Oh mal, haya
casa con dos puertas, pues
tan mal el honor se guarda! (188)

From this moment on, the injury to Don Fabio's leg is eclipsed by the need restore his honor. In the final scene, Don Fabio arrives at Don Felix's house ready to avenge his family honor by killing both Don Felix and Laura:

Aunque las fuerzas me faltan
no las fuerzas del honor
para tomar mil venganzas
[…]
Mi espada
hará pasar por el pecho
vuestro. (187)

Just as in the above example, throughout the play, the characters can be seen to obey the logic of their *substance* in ways that correspond to their stations in the organic hierarchy. As we have already seen, the women are portrayed as weaker than the men in general terms and even they are willing to admit their inheritance from Eve. At the same time, however, they are all noble characters who maintain that they are honorable. The text demonstrates its feudalizing ideology as it reproduces the notion of transparency or correspondence between blood and comport; according to the characters themselves, their blood/substance defines (or *is*) who they are and what they do. In Calderón, the frequent appearance of the phrase, "soy quien soy" expresses the correspondence between blood and deeds. When his characters insist upon this notion, they are insisting that their name/lineage is evidence of their honor. Laura, for example, is the wiser and nobler of the two women characters and is the one who

moves the play toward its final resolution by telling the truth about what has occurred. She insists that because she is who she is, she tells the truth. Her very substance tends toward this:

Porque yo digo verdad,
y soy quien soy. (164)

In the same fashion, Don Félix obeys the noble nature of his substance by coming to the rescue of a lady in danger, even though he suspects that she has betrayed him. Just like Laura, he expresses the oneness of his substance and his actions with the same phrase—"soy quien soy":

Ven conmigo: que aunque no
mereces finezas tantas,
soy quien soy, y he de librarte. (187)

In the same way, Fabio's swift defense of his name and honor in spite of his injured state demonstrates that he too must obey the dictates of blood regardless of circumstance.

Although within the framework of Calderón's play, the feudal unity expressed in the notion of "soy quien soy" seems intact, the very fact that his characters must insist upon this indicates the degree to which the feudal system has already been altered by a new set of relations. Following Rodríguez's argument, when the nobility is forced to clarify and assert its identity, this identity is already in crisis; when the nobility is forced to say "I am the lord", the feudal structure has been compromised: "Resulta evidente que si Luis XIV tuvo que decir en París "el Estado soy yo", eso significaba sólo que ya no lo era" ("Formaciones" 168). When Calderón's characters exclaim "soy quien soy", the effort to restore the transparency particular to feudal relations can be observed.

Just as in Calderón's plays, noble characters in Sor Juana's texts also continue to express the notion of correspondence or transparency between noble name and noble behavior. In *Amor es más laberinto*, Lidoro, a noble prince, indicates the correspondence between his name and his deeds when he states: "Cumplir con quien soy deseo" (Juana, "Amor" 312). Teseo, in like fashion, links being with action or substance with deed on multiple occasions. To give but one example, he states his love for Fedra accordingly: "Yo soy el que soy porque soy vuestro" (332). In *Los empeños de una casa*, Doña Leonor expects Don Pedro to behave honorably and to respect her rejection of his love precisely because he is, in fact, a nobleman:

Permitid, señor don Pedro,
ya que me hacéis tantas honras,
que os suplique, por quien sois,
me hagáis la mayor de todas;
[…]
os suplico que calléis. (Juana, *Los empeños de una casa/Pawns* 124)

As we find out, however, Don Pedro's actions are often not worthy of his name, as is also the case with his sister, Doña Ana. In spite of the fact that the notion of correspondence between name and deed is appealed to by certain characters in Sor Juana's plays, neither of her two plays is nearly as adamant about (re)claiming the transparency of the social hierarchy as is the work of Calderón.

While the works of both playwrights are characterized by a general lack of transparency that seems to permeate the action, Calderón's play identifies disguise and darkness more readily with the fallen nature of the world while Sor Juana's plays seem to suggest that the confusion caused by external appearances is simply the nature of reality and not necessarily a result of sin. Although the characters in Sor Juana's plays are eventually restored to their rightful places, full transparency is not achieved by the end of the play. The public/private split is here more fully instated and accepted as part of reality, and this is evinced in the fact that the omniscient perspective of the father figure/king/God has been replaced to a large degree by the perspective of the audience; at the end of the action the audience knows more about all that has happened than does any single character. Furthermore, the interior/exterior split or the lack of correspondence between appearances and truth is often utilized in Sor Juana's plays for comic effect. Given the familiarity of the phrase "soy quien soy", audiences would have been amused when in Sor Juana's plays characters who insist upon being who they are, are not in fact who they say they are.

Confusion of identities is rampant in *Los empeños de una casa*. Don Juan speaks to Doña Leonor in the dark mistaking her for Doña Ana and she responds accordingly:

Caballero, o lo que sois:
[…]

Deteneos
y conoced, más cobrada
la atención, que no soy yo
la que vos buscáis. (Juana, *Los empeños de una casa/Pawns* 72)

Not only is Don Juan confused about Doña Leonor's identity, but she insinuates that she cannot be sure of his either, and not even of his status as *caballero*, a fact that should be apparent in his manner of speaking even in the dark. In both of Sor Juana's plays the figure of the *gracioso* is caught up in the confusion of identities to comic effect. In *Amor es*, Atún is reluctant to reveal his identity as he fears that revealing his association with Teseo may provoke an attack from an enemy. Again, darkness shrouds the stage, and Atún will only confirm his identity after Teseo confirms his own:

¿Eres tú, Señor?
[…]
Dí si eres tú, que el temor,
hasta ver si tú eres tú,
no dirá si yo soy yo. (Juana, "Amor" 334)

In *Los empeños* when the *gracioso*, Castaño, is sent to deliver a letter to Don Rodrigo he fears being attacked in the street and decides to protect himself by dressing in some of Doña Leonor's clothing. When he is spied by Don Pedro as he tries to leave the house he is forced to pretend to be Doña Leonor:

Mas por Leonor me marca,
yo quiero fingir ser ella,
que quizá atiplando el habla
no me entenderá la letra. (Juana, *Los empeños de una casa/Pawns* 204)

Throughout the exchange that follows between the two male characters, Castaño's use of the "yo soy" is always accompanied by untruth and comedy, with the result that the significance of the declaration "soy quien soy" is transformed. When the audience hears a character insisting upon his or her identity in Sor Juana's play, such insistence almost always marks deception. When Castaño says, for example, "yo soy mujer que sé bien donde me aprieta el zapato", the

phrase "yo soy mujer" becomes part of his disguise from an unsuspecting gentleman who simply can't fathom a servant in lady's clothing (210). When Castaño's speech emulates the logic of the noble declaration "soy quien soy" it is funny precisely because it is false and ridiculous to imagine coming from the mouth of a mere servant. The confusion regarding appearances is utilized throughout the scene as Don Pedro continues to woo a male servant dressed in a woman's clothing. Later in the same scene, when Don Pedro is utterly confused by the coarse speech of "Doña Leonor" (Castaño), Castaño challenges Don Pedro to call him/her a liar: "¿Pues soy yo farandulera?" (212). As the audience is well aware, the answer is of course, yes, he is. While Sor Juana's plays don't go so far as to place blatant deceit in the mouths of the noble characters, much amusement is generated by the fact that appearances can be deceiving[45]. Sor Juana's text is clearly less intent upon restoring transparency; the fact that her work melds the public/private split with feudalizing thematics makes for a highly contradictory ideological mix where the restoration to rightful place is necessary but the feudal notion of transparency has become extraneous.

Having mentioned already some of the ways in which Sor Juana's play makes comic use of the new reality of the public/private and interior/exterior split, Calderón's text begins to seem a more somber text, and one might wonder if Calderón's *comedia* is in fact at all comical. The issue is again determined by the ideological optic in question. Sor Juana's text is inevitably regarded as more comical for most modern readers given the fact that she makes use of certain structures that are familiar to our contemporary ideological matrix and provoke humor from within this logic. Calderón's text is not without humor, however, and especially if one is able to appreciate the message from the vantage point of the feudal optic. In *Casa con dos puertas*, for example, the foolish Marcela is surprised when she, Laura and Lisardo are almost caught red-handed conversing together late at night by Laura's father, Don Fabio:

[45] Although the nobles in Sor Juana's plays do not make blatant misstatements regarding their identities, they do in fact often allow others to be confused about their identities for a time in order to gain information or buy time. When in Los empeños Leonor's father, Don Rodrigo mistakenly believes that it was Don Pedro who stole Leonor from his house, he then asks Pedro to marry his daughter and in this way restore the family honor. Don Pedro wants to marry Leonor, but he also knows that she most likely does not want to marry him. He allows Don Rodrigo to go on thinking that he did steal Leonor in order to have a chance to marry her. After the conversation between the two men in which they agree upon the marriage, Don Rodrigo praises the dishonest Don Pedro: "¡Oh qué bien que se conoce vuestra nobleza y talento!" (Juana, *Los empeños de una casa/Pawns* 234). Again, one's noble name does not seem to guarantee noble behavior, and transparency is absent.

¿Quién pudiera prevenir
que ahora hubiese de venir
tu padre? (Calderón, *Mágico* 142)

This line is funny in this play and for feudalizing logic because the appearance of the father figure is exactly what always must and does happen in an honor play. The king and/or the father figure whose honor is at risk must find out and restore the family honor, usually either by taking vengeance or by blessing a marriage. The foolishness of the woman is emphasized again in this passage in a way that would have provoked laughter. Marcela's surprise at Fabio's entrance is overly naïve and therefore comical to feudal thinking.

This same moment in the text is also useful for exploring the impulse of substantialism to make everything known. In Calderón's play especially, when falseness is suspected the impulse of noble characters is to "publish" the news. The notion of the seeing in Calderón is still very feudalizing and representative of an omniscient perspective: "En el feudalismo la vida privada no existe, todo es público, y esa distinción entre lo privado y lo público se va a ir conformando dentro de este período histórico que conocemos como 'período de transición' (Rodríguez and Salvador, *Introducción* 50). In Calderón's work the impetus to make things public is still equivalent to the ushering of secrets/sin into the light. When the text demands that truth be known— "Salgan verdades a luz" and confusion banished "de confusiones tantas os sacaré"—a feudalizing logic is at work (*Mágico* 192-3). The discovery of truth is inevitable as hiding from omniscience is impossible; the eye that sees all at the end of the play is generally the brother, father or King, always allegorizing the eye of God. Thus when Don Félix thinks Laura to be false he shouts:

¡Vive el cielo,
que dé voces que despierten
a tu padre, al mundo entero,
diciendo quién eres! (151)

In Calderón's play, restoration begins when that which has been obscured and confused is brought into the light. When truth is known and individuals gravitate toward their rightful places, feudal transparency or unity is salvaged. In Sor Juana's plays, characters also gravitate

toward their rightful places[46] and restoration of honor comes about through marriage, but the entire truth of the situation is never fully revealed to a wise and all-seeing father figure. While Sor Juana's plays do rehearse the feudalizing thematic of honor, the basic epistemology involved also produces the new public/private dichotomy, and for this reason the full restoration of the transparency particular to feudal relations is made impossible. In other words, *even the feudal notion of honor itself is redeployed according to the logic of the public/private split*, and with very specific consequences. In Sor Juana's theater a certain public unity is achieved by the end of the action, but private interests have also been revealed as a new and permanent influence.

In the case of *Los empeños,* a play that is highly symptomatic of the new reality, the maintenance of honor depends in part upon keeping up *the appearance of honor* in the public sphere. While honor is still produced in this work as a substantial reality largely condensed in the bodies of women, it is simultaneously produced as a function of the gaze of the other. Honor is no longer maintained exclusively by controlling the purity of substance, but also by controlling the perception of others. The contradiction implied is great for although honor was

[46] Leonor and Carlos, the predestined pair in Los empeños, are ultimately reunited and rewarded for their patience and confidence in fortune. Just as in the other play, Amor es más laberinto, analyzed earlier in this chapter, the noblest characters are less disposed to frenetic movement than the others. Both Don Carlos and Doña Leonor make statements that reflect their confidence in each other and in the fact that they are destined to be together. When Don Carlos discovers that he and Leonor are both captive in the same house he reacts with patience:

DON CARLOS Quiero esperar hasta ver
qué causa la trajo aquí
pues si piadosa mi estrella
aquí la dejo venir,
¿adónde tengo de ir
si aquí me la dejo a ella? (Juana, *Los empeños de una casa: Amor* 191)

In the same fashion, when Celia tells Doña Leonor that Don Pedro hopes to marry her, Doña Leonor insists that such a union would imply a violation of what nature has ordained. Her rightful place is with Don Carlos:

DOÑA LEONOR ¿Qué dices, Celia? Primero
Que yo de Don Pedro sea,
Verás de su eterno alcázar
fugitivas las estrellas;
primero romperá el mar
la no violada obediencia
que a sus desbocadas olas
[impone] freno de arena;
[…]
Primero, tocado el orden
que guarda Naturaleza, (Juana, *Los empeños de una casa/Pawns* 184)

still tied to women's bodies, Sor Juana's play exposes the fact that the public/private split had muddied the waters to the point that honor could also be "preserved" by making sure that no one found out that it had been at risk. Throughout the play many characters express nervousness about the publication of events and exposure to "public desaire" (Juana, *Los empeños de una casa: Amor* 283). Doña Leonor is of course worried about her father finding out about her flight from home with Don Carlos and Don Carlos is worried about the same. It is Leonor's father, Don Rodrigo, however, whose preoccupation with others finding out about his daughter's impious behavior drives the action of the play. In the following passage, Don Rodrigo is informed of his daughter's absence:

DON RODRIGO ¿Qué me dices, Hernando?
HERNANDO Lo que pasa:
que mi señora se salió de casa.
DON RODRIGO ¿Y con quién, no has sabido?
HERNANDO ¿Cómo puedo
si, como sabes tú, todo Toledo
y cuantos a él llegaban,
su belleza e ingenio celebraban?
Con lo cual, conocerse no podía
cual festejo era amor, cuál cortesía;
en que no sé si tú culpado has sido,
pues festejarla tanto has permitido,
sin advertir que, aunque era recatada,
es fuerte la ocasión y el verse amada,
y que es fácil que, amante e importuno,
entre los otros le agradase alguno.
DON RODRIGO Hernando, no me apures la paciencia
que aqueste ya no es tiempo de advertencia.
¡O fiera! ¿Quién diría
de aquella mesurada hipocresía,

de aquel punto y recato que mostraba,
que liviandad tan grande se encerraba
en su pecho alevoso?
¡Oh mujeres! ¡Oh monstruo venenoso!
¿Quién en vosotras fía,
si con igual locura y osadía,
con la misma medida
se pierde la ignorante y la entendida?
Pensaba yo, hija vil, que tu belleza,
por la incomodidad de mi pobreza,
con tu ingenio sería
lo que más dote te daría;
y ahora, en lo que has hecho,
conozco que es más daño que provecho;
pues el ser conocida y celebrada
y por nuevo milagro festejada,
me sirve, hecha la cuenta,
solo de que se sepa más tu afrenta.
Pero ¿cómo a la queja se abalanza
primero mi valor, que a la venganza?
Pero ¿cómo (¡ay de mí!), si en lo que lloro
la afrenta sé y el agresor ignoro? (157-8)

The reader may note that as was the case with Calderón, the action of this play begins by highlighting the foolish and errant behavior of women. In contrast to Calderón's version, however, the foolishness of men is also revealed throughout the text. In general, both men and women share in the blame in Sor Juana's writing. In the above passage, Don Rodrigo is revealed as having been foolish in exposing his daughter to public display in hopes of winning a rich suitor to make up for his own poverty. His discourse captures the contradiction, particular to the historical moment, of a nobility rich in titles but without monetary wealth. It is at this

point that the private interests of Don Rodrigo are revealed as well as his need to negotiate a deal.

This scene quoted above sets up the action of the play. The beautiful daughter has been stolen from the house and her father has to discover her whereabouts in order to restore honor to his family. Although he speaks at first using the typical language of vengeance, Don Rodrigo's rage at Leonor's disappearance is markedly less than that of the father figure in Calderón's text. In contrast to the father/brother figures in Calderón's text and in spite of his brief spouting of vengeful intent, Don Rodrigo conveys throughout the text that he is actually more concerned about restoring *appearances* than ascertaining the status of his *honor*. In other words, he knows his honor/reputation is at risk as long as his daughter is absent from home and unmarried, but he is more concerned to resolve the situation quickly and keep up the *appearance* of honor than to discover (or reveal to anyone) the *truth* about what has happened. After discussing the situation with his servant, Hernando, Don Rodrigo agrees that the best solution is to locate and marry Leonor and her abductor as swiftly as possible:

DON RODRIGO Buscar a mi ofensor aprisa eligo
Por convertirle de enemigo en hijo.
HERNANDO Sí, señor, que el remedio es bien se aplique
antes que el mal que pasa se publique. (159-60)

Although in the above passage Don Rodrigo states his intent to find the man who has stolen Leonor, the action of the play reveals that he is hasty in his search and uninterested in the details. When Don Carlos tries to explain to Don Rodrigo that he (and not Don Pedro) is the one who took Leonor and is her rightful suitor, Don Rodrigo doesn't have time to listen to Carlos' story. Instead, he merely informs Carlos that he need not explain himself, and as a result the truth of the situation remains obscured:

DON RODRIGO Don Carlos, nada me admira:
mozo he sido, aunque soy viejo;
vos sois mozo, y es preciso
que deis sus frutos al tiempo;
y supuesto que decís

que os es preciso esconderos,
haced vos lo que os convenga,
que yo la causa no inquiero
de cosas que no me tocan. (Juana, *Los empeños de una casa/Pawns* 146)

Whatever Don Carlos has done, it doesn't really concern Don Rodrigo. Don Rodrigo's intention to marry Leonor with as much haste as possible leads him to assume too quickly that it was Don Pedro who took her; the fact that maintaining the appearance of honor is more important than proving its substantiality is clear in Don Rodrigo's lack of fury; Don Rodrigo doesn't want to fight with Pedro, only make him his son-in-law as quickly as possible:

DON RODRIGO Vos, amante de Leonor,
la solicitaste ciego,
pudiendo haberos valido
de mí, y con indignos medios
la sacaste de mi casa,
cosa que… Pero no quiero
reñir ahora el delito
que ya no tiene remedio. (150)

Even Don Pedro, who does want to marry Leonor, is concerned at the speed with which the situation is unfolding because he knows that Doña Leonor will likely refuse to marry him if he doesn't have time to romance her at bit. Even when he openly denies having stolen Leonor and in an attempt to buy time to woo her, Don Rodrigo presses forward with the wedding plans:

DON RODRIGO Don Pedro, a lo que habéis dicho
hacer réplica no quiero,
sobre si pudo o no ser,
como decís, el suceso;
pero siéndole ya a todos
notorios vuestros festejos,

sabiendo que Leonor falta
y yo la busco, y sabiendo
que en vuestra casa la hallé,
nunca queda satisfecho
mi honor, si vos no os casáis; (156)

Don Rodrigo never expresses a desire to know for certain what has happened or to usher the truth out from the shadows. He simply repeats his mantra:

DON RODRIGO Pues solo con que os caséis,
queda todo satisfecho. (234)

In the final scene when the truth is finally revealed that Don Carlos was in fact the one who originally stole Leonor from her father's house, Don Rodrigo switches his focus from Don Pedro to Don Carlos immediately and accepts the match without any further explanation. The ending can be interpreted as both feudalizing and as evidence of the impact of the public/private split characteristic of a new set of social relations on the horizon. Just as in Calderón's play, the fact that an honorable man is willing to marry Leonor is indication of her own honor, but at the same time, there is an added urgency in Sor Juana's text that has everything to do with settling the situation before word gets out, before the news is made public. Thus, Don Rodrigo's final statement with regard to the situation:

DON RODRIGO Como se case Leonor
y quede mi honor sin riesgo,
lo demás no importa nada;
y así, don Carlos, me alegro
de haber ganado tal hijo. (*Los empeños de una casa: Amor* 287)

The nature of the ideological differences between Calderón and Sor Juana's texts is often somewhat difficult to recognize at first, but these differences are significant and key for understanding the ideological extraction of each text. In the two plays the ideological contrast is particularly evident in the disparity between the two father figures. On the one hand, Calderón's Don Fabio continues to allegorize the eye of God. He is the consummate father figure who defends honor at all cost, brandishing his sword even though he is wounded and

dragging his own leg beneath him. He is the one who discovers that things are out of place and moves to restore honor swiftly and completely. The offense to his name/blood requires that he wield his sword and only put it away if honor is restored by alternate means, i.e., through the mechanism of another man literally placing himself between the father's sword and his daughter. Sor Juana's Don Rodrigo, on the other hand, is a father figure who does not see all, nor does he necessarily want to, and he isn't really interested in restoring honor through bloodshed. In *Los empeños* bloodshed is always much less imminent, a feature that is due in large part to the fact that Sor Juana's text reconfigures the notion of honor according to the logic of the public/private split.

When the thematics of honor is staged in the theater and pushed through the ideological sieve of the public/private dichotomy, one possible outcome is that the notion of honor becomes identified with that of *public reputation* (rather than actual purity from sin), as is the case in Sor Juana's play. It's not that the notion of honor as substantial purity is altogether absent from the text, but rather that honor is understood here as a question involving both individual comport as well as external perception; what others perceive becomes almost as important as the sin itself.

In both *Casa con dos puertas* and in *Los empeños* the father figures are propelled into action either by the absence of the daughter from the family house or the unwelcome presence of a man in the daughter's chamber. Both scenarios imply a loss of honor, and both texts make clear that the recuperation of honor can only be achieved through bloodshed or marriage. The fact, however, that Don Rodrigo is only interested in the second option—marriage—is yet another indication of the degree to which things have shifted. The final scene in both Calderón's *Casa con dos puertas* and Sor Juana's *Los empeños* ends in multiple marriages, and yet there is an important difference to be observed. While in Calderón's text, the willingness to marry on the part of the suitor vouches for the honor of the woman, in Sor Juana's text, the marriage of the potentially defamed women (to any willing and more-or-less acceptable suitor) restores the family to good standing in the public eye, regardless of any sins that may or may not have been committed. Here honor is not cleansed according to a strictly substantialist

logic; the emphasis on the purity and rightful place of substance is mingled with the restoration of the appearance of honor as a function of an external gaze.

As noted earlier in the chapter, in Calderón's play, when honor has been lost (or is in doubt) the impulse of the men who discover this fact is to shout it out for all to know. Letting the truth be known is the first step toward cleansing honor, as per substantialist ideology. In Sor Juana's play, however, the father figure consistently prefers to consult with others regarding his situation. When his servant, Hernando, informs him of his daughter's absence, Don Rodrigo discusses the matter with Hernando, and together they decide to keep things quiet and quickly resolve the matter by proposing a marriage between Don Pedro and Doña Leonor. Don Rodrigo is a character who weighs his options as he engages in political maneuvering, a feature totally absent from Calderón's text. In Sor Juana's text, Don Rodrigo is obligated to behave somewhat like a shrewd businessman using whatever capital he has, in this case his noble lineage—"ya sabéis vos que no hay sangre en Toledo que pueda exceder la mía"— (*Los empeños de una casa: Amor* 217) and the beauty of his daughter in an attempt to exchange these for monetary gain:

> Pensaba yo, hija vil, que tu belleza,
> por la incomodidad de mi pobreza,
> con tu ingenio sería
> lo que más dote te daría; (157-8)

The daughter's honor/reputation is especially important in the play because she represents the only collateral that Don Rodrigo has available to him to utilize in order to remedy his impoverished state. When Don Rodrigo pays a visit to Don Pedro, he does so in order to restore his family honor in a surprising way within the context of the honor play—by *negotiating a deal*. Not only is the appearance in the text of this kind of negotiation of private interests important to observe, but also the fact that honor is restored through the vehicle of negotiation, rather than through bloodshed or the threat of the same answered by a nobleman willing to vouch for the woman's honor. Unlike the father in Calderón's text who is accompanied by a servant ready to fight in defense of honor alongside his master, Don Rodrigo enlists the help of Don Juan, a friend of Don Pedro, in order that Don Juan might help convince

Pedro of the plan. Again, Don Rodrigo engages in consultation before taking action. In the following quote, Don Rodrigo explains to Don Juan that Don Pedro is more likely to accept the offer to marry Leonor if Don Juan will only help convince him:

DON RODRIGO Don Juan, pues vos sois su amigo,
reducidle a la razón,
pues por aquesta ocasión
os quise traer conmigo;
que pues vos sois el testigo
del daño que me causó
cuando a Leonor me llevó,
podréis con desembarazo
hablar en aqueste caso
con más llaneza que yo.
Ya de todo os he informado,
y en un caso tan severo
siempre lo trata el tercero
mejor que no el agraviado.
Que al que es noble y nació honrado,
cuando se le representa
la afrenta, por más que sienta,
le impide, aunque ése es el medio,
la vergüenza del remedio
el remedio de la afrenta. (*Los empenos de una casa/Pawns* 140-2).

The above quote is particularly revealing of the contradictions of the text, for although the plot revolves around the restoration of honor, a theme that derives from substantialist ideology, the idea that a third party, external to the situation, should be enlisted to help restore one's family honor by means of rational conversation is utterly foreign to substantialism. Additionally, it is also important to note in this passage the value placed on the *friendship* between Don Juan and Don Pedro and the potential sway of the advice of a friend. As Rodríguez has pointed out, as

the new set of social relations emerged during the transition, *subjectivity*, understood at first as the unfettered communication between like souls, was produced in the form of *dialogue, friendship* and the notion of the *contract* (*Theory* 14, 290). Although noble status and the duty to protect honor do connect the men in the play, the role of friendship is emphasized in the resolution to the problem more than the duty to protect honor. It is the friendship between Don Juan and Don Pedro upon which Don Rodrigo depends in order to get what he wants. Don Juan agrees to lend his assistance in order to resolve the matter and come to an agreement:

DON JUAN Señor Don Rodrigo, yo, por la ley de caballero,
os prometo reducir
a vuestro gusto a Don Pedro,
a que él juzgo que está llano,
porque tampoco no quiero
vender por fineza mía
a lo que es mérito vuestro.
Y pues, porque no se niegue
no le avisamos, entremos
a la sala… (*Los empenos de una casa/Pawns* 140-2)

With his sword in its sheath and accompanied by Don Juan, Don Rodrigo pays a visit to Don Pedro. Again, it is significant that Don Juan speaks for the offended party while Don Rodrigo waits on the side. His function as mediator between the other two men is clear in the following passages. Here, Don Juan speaks to Don Pedro to explain the situation and express his own opinion that Don Pedro would be wise to accept Don Rodrigo's offer:

DON JUAN Yo vengo al servicio vuestro,
y pues a los que venimos
dilación no admite, empiezo.
Don Pedro, vos no ignoráis,
como tan gran caballero,
las muchas obligaciones
que tenéis de parecerlo;

esto supuesto, el señor
don Rodrigo tiene un duelo con vos. (150)

The fact that honor offended must be avenged and/or restored in some fashion is still the driving force behind the action, but honor is restored in *Los empeños* as Don Juan expresses, by means of a proposition:

DON JUAN ¿De qué, amigo, estáis suspenso,
cuando la proposición
resulta en decoro vuestro;
cuando el señor don Rodrigo,
tan reportado y tan cuerdo,
os convida con la dicha
de haceros felice dueño
de la beldad de Leonor? (152)

Don Rodrigo enlists the help of Don Juan, another young man and friend of Don Pedro, to persuade Don Pedro, if necessary, of the benefits of the arrangement. After Don Juan has made his arguments in defense of the proposition, Don Rodrigo asserts his own position with respect to the negotiation. Both men work together to convince Don Pedro that he is getting a good deal. Don Rodrigo's intent to exchange blood (lineage/title) for money is cleverly inserted into an argument where he admits the blemish of his own poverty, but at the same time reminds Don Pedro of the original offense committed—the stealing of Leonor—and of Don Pedro's duty to make amends:

DON RODRIGO Supuesto esto, ya sabéis
vos que no hay sangre en Toledo
que pueda exceder la mía;
y siendo esto todo cierto,
¿Qué dificultad podéis
hallar para ser mi yerno?
Y si es falta el estar pobre
y vos rico, fuera bueno

> responder eso, si yo
> os tratara el casamiento
> con Leonor; mas pues vos fuisteis
> el que la eligió primero,
> y os pusisteis en estado
> que ha de ser preciso hacerlo,
> no he tenido yo la culpa
> de lo que fue arrojo vuestro. (*Los empeños de una casa:Amor* 217)

Although Don Rodrigo approaches Don Pedro in order to restore honor, it is also clear that he is hoping to benefit from the fact that Doña Leonor has apparently been snatched from her house by a wealthy suitor. This situation accounts for the lack of fury in Don Rodrigo when he discovers that his honor is at risk; in reality, the situation presents him with a good opportunity. The restoration of honor is mixed with the pursuit of private interests.

The role of the audience in each of the plays in question is also indicative of the ideological bent of each text. In Sor Juana's play, the public has become the repository of information, gathering in evidence as communication flows from the stage to the audience:

> It presupposes precisely the capturing of this new social reality whose effect has been the appearance of the Theater proper and with it the figure that is inseparable from the public, namely the common people, transformed into their new role as judge. Both are the effects of a public sphere and of the functioning within it of a strictly public ideology. (Rodríguez, *Theory* 46)

And in conjunction with the developing public ideology, of course, the notion of the private is also being produced. Throughout the play, the private interests and interior thoughts of characters are revealed to the audience, working toward the production of the notion of the private that is associated with the developing subject of bourgeois relations. Multiple perspectives populate the play and the aside is one of the mechanisms that convey these multiple vantage points to the audience, in this way expressing the development of the public/private and the interior/exterior split. In the use of the aside in Sor Juana's play, the

private truth of the individual emerges according to a logic contradictory to the notion of Truth produced by substantialism. Much information in *Los empeños* is communicated through the use of the aside, far more than in Calderón's *Casa con dos puertas*. The development of individual perspectives is greater in Sor Juana, while in Calderón the omniscient gaze still imposes itself at the end of the text. While in Calderón's play, Don Fabio is the ultimate judge and arbiter of justice, in Sor Juana's staging of a similar plot, although the father figure does insist upon resolving the situation, no single character is ever privy to a totalizing perspective. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Sor Juana's play produces an audience that knows more than any single character involved; only the audience knows all that has occurred. In this way the audience takes the place of the omniscient perspective of the father/King/God, fulfilling its role as the new judge. The prevalence of the aside in Sor Juana's play is indicative of the degree to which the notion of the private had begun to permeate the ideological matrix.

Given the fact that the audience of *Los empeños* is privy to a wider perspective than the individual characters on the stage, the audience is automatically granted the power to cast judgment regarding the action and resolution of the play. In the case of *Casa con dos puertas*, however, a feudalizing logic that produces the text as *ejemplo* (even if not strictly liturgical) still permeates. While at the end of Sor Juana's play, the audience is clearly the judge, Calderón's text, to a large degree, situates itself in the seat of judgment over the audience. Rodríguez examines the case of the *auto sacramentales* of the transition as an example of staged texts from the period where "a public is posited, not as 'judge' but as the 'faithful', in the liturgical sense" (*Theory* 48). Although Calderón's play is not a liturgical piece, the play does seem to work against granting the audience the role of judge, even in spite of the fact that the very format of the theater already grants this privilege. Calderón's father figure judges the case and the audience is thus encouraged to digest the near tragedy that has been staged as *un ejemplo*, or an example, in this case of behavior *not* to be followed.

The work of both writers reproduces the contradictions of the period, but in different ways. As we have seen, the loss of feudal transparency is of less concern in Sor Juana's text and the public/private split is here more accommodated. Calderón's texts generally stage examples of feudal virtue while working simultaneously against the logic of the theater,

whereas Sor Juana's plays stage examples of honor restored in a way that more fully embraces and exploits not only the logic of the public/private split but the logic of the theater itself. Even Calderón's title, *Casa con dos puertas mala es de guardar*, reveals something about the contradictory nature of the fusion between the theater and feudalizing ideology. It could be argued that the major difference between the ideology that informs the work of Sor Juana and that of Calderón is the degree to which new structures (of the theater and the public/private split) represent a threat. In Calderón the threat is more palpable—things leak, holes have been punched in the fabric of daily life—while in Sor Juana the public/private split is simply enmeshed as part of reality. As a result, Calderón's text drives steadily toward reestablishing feudal unity and closing off the valves that allow for too much circulation whereas Sor Juana's text is more lenient with respect to movement. In Calderón's play the ideological tension (feudalizing content expressed through alien molds) is perhaps more evident in the fact that his work takes less delight in and exploits to a lesser degree the logic of the theater. In Calderón, the porous structure of the stage is like the structure of the house he critiques, the house with two doors, a house where people, and therefore honor, seep out:

> ¡Oh, mal haya casa con dos puertas,
> pues tan mal el honor se guarda! (*Mágico* 188)

At the end of his text, the folly of such a structure is made patent, honor is re-enclosed within the confines of marriages made possible by honorable men and all secrets have been ushered into the light and swept away. For feudalizing ideology, the ideal house should mimic to a certain degree the structure of the convent with walls that contain and maintain honor and a father/husband guarding at the only door. In Calderón's text, the uneasiness with which feudalizing ideology inhabits a genre and a theatrical space that is not its own is often visible.

As we have already observed, Sor Juana's play is not without its own set of contradictions particular to the period of transition, but hers is a text that participates more willingly in the logic the theater and according to the developing public/private split. The fact that a new structure is already in place, and one that often undermines resurgent feudalizing ideology, can be observed from the start in the confusion regarding the identity of the characters and the frequent appearance of the disguise. The fact that one's exterior

appearance might not correspond to his or her true identity creates a split between the interior and the exterior of the person that, as Rodríguez has explained, is analogous to the public/private split that has begun to pervade the social formation as a whole. At the conclusion of Sor Juana's plays order and honor are restored, but there are still secrets that have not been ushered into the light, a feature impossible in a truly feudal text. Sor Juana's text also prescribes a markedly less stringent application of the violence typically associated with the defense of honor. The general tendency of people toward their rightful places in the hierarchy remains intact, but the cleansing of blood does not take center stage. The notion of honor is constructed here as having much to do with perception in a world where confusion and misperception are portrayed as the norm, a reality that dictates that offended fathers proceed with much caution before deciding to brandish the sword. Unlike Calderón's text that presents *un ejemplo* of foolish behavior not to be emulated, Sor Juana's version of the story is presented as a comically hyperbolic depiction of a scenario associated with daily life. In other words, the "trials of a house" portrayed here are presented as evoking the typical trials of a typical household. Given that such confusion can happen to any family, the resolution to the problem should be metered and not derived from a lust for vengeance. In a passage that represents one of Sor Juana's direct references within her play to Calderon's work, Don Rodrigo explains to Don Carlos the importance of avoiding solving questions related to honor with the sword. This passage displays clearly the departure in Sor Juana from the emphasis on blood:

DON RODRIGO Tomad, hijo, mi consejo:
que en las dolencias de honor
no todas veces son buenos,
si bastan sólo suaves,
los medicamentos recios,
que antes suelen hacer daño;
pues cuando está malo un miembro,
el experto cirujano
no luego le aplica el hierros

y cota lo dolorido,
sino que aplica primero
los remedios lentitivos;
que acudir a los cuaterios,
es cuando se reconoce
que ya no hay otro remedio. (*Los empeños de una casa/Pawns* 232)

Clearly, Sor Juana's play continues to reproduce the feudalizing notion of honor, but both the shift away from bloodshed as the primary vehicle for restoration and the new private inflection of the notion of honor reveal the ideological contradictions traversing her text. As Don Pedro notes in the aside quoted at the beginning of the chapter, in the context of the transition, "disimular importa" (250).

Chapter Four: Women in Transition

> A sort of topgraphical parity would also guarantee the converse, that a man could be squeezed out of a woman. (Laquer 26)
>
> [S]i es que soy mujer,
> ninguno lo verifique. (Juana, "Romance 48" 140)

The final chapter of this project revisits the issue of the problematic nature of many postmodern critical discussions of Sor Juana that categorize her as an early feminist asking once again if it is really suitable to label Sor Juana's work as feminist. This part of the discussion attempts to further illuminate the logic of Sor Juana's defense of herself and women as well as her understanding of what it meant to be not only a woman, but also a woman who wrote and was published in the 17th century. Building upon the exploration of the historical ideologies that informed Sor Juana's work it is possible to begin developing a better history of the category of woman and the notions of sexual difference as they were produced by transitional ideologies. In order to comprehend Sor Juana's defense of women it is essential to grasp that her understanding of sexual difference was in large part a substantializing extraction, very distinct from a modern configuration of the notions of *sex* and *gender*. Various passages in her work make plain that for the nun her *substance* was of far greater import than her *sex*, a position that she fully expected her ecclesiastical superiors to apprehend and corroborate as well. Before examining the issue of sexual difference as it appears in Sor Juana's texts, however, it is important to contextualize the concluding analysis by taking stock for a moment of some of the ways in which women's history has generally been approached.

4.1 Toward a reconciliation of the unhappy marriage of feminism and Marxism

In the decades since the 60's, the possibility of combining Feminist and Marxist understandings of history has been attempted on multiple occasions, many of which have

resulted in what Heidi Hartman referred to in her famous essay by the same title as *the unhappy marriage of feminism and Marxism*. In broad strokes, the reasons for the unhappiness of this union are related to the general critiques that feminist and Marxist approaches have typically leveled at one another. Marxist critiques of feminist approaches have often pointed to weak historical analyses that have often led to both an ahistorical essentialization of the category of *woman* (of the kind observed by Ángela Olalla as referenced in the introduction to this discussion), and, as Martha E. Gimenez observes, to feminist scholarship which "postulates ahistorical theories of patriarchy" (Gimenez). Feminism (and very often Marxist and Materialist Feminism), on the other hand, has critiqued Marxist scholarship for its lack of discussion of sexual difference as it relates to exploitation; in particular, the issues of women's work, i.e., necessary but unpaid work that takes place outside of exchange relations, and reproduction have been two areas that feminist criticism has argued should be afforded greater consideration within the history of exploitation.

Gimenez describes the lack of a sufficient theoretical model in a way that suggests the necessity of bringing together feminist and materialist approaches:

> Insistence on the importance of material conditions, the material historical moments as a complex of social relations which include and influence gender hierarchy, the materiality of the body and its sexual, reproductive and other biological functions remain, however, abstract pronouncements which unavoidably lead to an empiricist focus on the immediately given. There is no theory of history or of social relations or of the production of gender hierarchies that could give guidance about the meaning of whatever is observed in a given 'material historical moment.' (Gimenez)

In like fashion, feminist Marxist Nancy Holmstrom, in her introduction to *The Socialist Feminist Project: A Contemporary Reader in Theory and Politics*, also acknowledges the sometimes rocky history between these theoretical camps, but nevertheless argues that Marxism still represents the best place for feminist projects to begin:

> My own opinion is that critiques of Marxism as sexist for focusing on relations of production and for ignoring labor in the family are misguided given the primary aim of Marxist theory, as explained above. [...] Marx was seeking to understand how various

> aspects of society including different forms of oppression, interrelate—and more important, how to change them—we need a theory that addresses these questions. That is precisely what historical materialism aims to do in both its sociological aspect and in its account of human change. (Holmstrom)

Mary Murray's 1995 book, *The Law of the Father?: Patriarchy in the transition from feudalism to capitalism,* is one example of a historical materialist analysis that does attempt to historicize women's repression as "the outcome of concrete material and historical processes" (14). In the following quote, Murray describes the state of scholarship on women's history and the history of patriarchy arguing, like Holmstrom, for the need for a theory of history that addresses the historical forms of patriarchy:

> Like other feminists I have long been interested in the historical analysis of patriarchy. Millet observes how 'patriarchy exhibits great variety in history and locale'. Similarily, for Firestone there have been 'many different forms of the patriarchal family throughout history'. Hartman refers to the initiation of patriarchy in state societies and the shift 'from family-based to industrially-based patriarchy'. For Marxist feminists McDonough and Harrison, the precise form of patriarchy is shaped historically by mode of production. For Eisenstien, 'All history may be patriarchal, but this does not mean that the difference between historical periods is not important. It is the specifics which elucidate the general meaning of patriarchal existence.' Meanwhile Mitchell argues that the Oedipus complex 'can certainly not be limited to the capitalist mode of production', but, she continues, 'this does not amount to saying that it does not assume particular forms of expression under different economic systems'.
>
> However, the claim that the form of women's oppression has varied historically remains in these accounts little more than an assertion. Within each of these accounts there is little if any systematic attempt to analyze different types of gender subordination historically. (34)

Murray finds that in recent years more scholarship on this theme by feminist historians has appeared, but still without offering "theoretically informed, overarching, epochal forms of

historical analysis" (34)[47]. As Murray's position implies, without a working theory of women's history, much feminist scholarship that is genuinely interested in changing the status quo runs the risk of misunderstanding the systems of exploitation and oppression it wishes to fight.

While there is not the place here to rehearse in more detail the challenges encountered in the long history of attempts at joining Marxist and feminist approaches and concerns, it is important to ask whether or not the theoretical problematic utilized throughout this discussion has any value for illuminating questions related to the issue of women's subordination. In other words, how does/could a Marxist approach, in this specific case an approach that employs the Althusserian notion of *structural causality*, account for the historical permutations of *patriarchy* and/or *gender relations* and/or *sexual reproduction*, categories which have traditionally been core issues for feminist discourse? Do these notions simply lie outside the realm of historical materialism or does the Marxist tradition include, as Holmstrom believes to be true, many of the tools necessary for successfully explaining the history and logic of women's repression as well?

4.2 Historicizing patriarchy in the transition

Many definitions of patriarchy have been elaborated since the 19th century, some as historical arguments, such as that of Engels himself[48], and others, such as that advanced by much of Socialist Feminism, that prefers to view patriarchy as a transhistorical reality grounded, as Martha Gimenez explains, "outside of the mode of production and, consequently and from the standpoint of Marxist theory, outside history" (Gimenez). Some, like Hartman, have understood patriarchy as largely autonomous with respect to class relations and have consequently developed a *dual-systems* theoretical approach, while others, like Murray, view

[47] Murray's text is a valuable contribution to his issue of historicizing patriarchy, but one with a somewhat ironic weak point. In her attempt to bring together feminist and Marxist analysis Murray correctly recognizes that for the materialist camp the sphere of production is primary while for much of feminist scholarship the relations of human reproduction are key to understanding oppression (20). Although hers is a feminist approach in that she takes up the very important task of attempting to historicize women's oppression, her work can also be critiqued from the perspective of feminism; from a feminist perspective, it is problematic that Murray's arguments focus principally on the issue of property relations and inheritance laws thus still leaving the question of reproduction largely unexplored in her explanation of the forms of women's subordination during the transition.

[48] Add proper reference here.*

class relations and patriarchy as “part of a single historical process” developing a *unified system* analysis (29). For the present analysis, while patriarchal structures are regarded as having a certain relative autonomy with respect to the social formation as a whole, the economic level is understood as determinant in the last instance. If we begin with a theoretical problematic that holds that nothing escapes the specific limits imposed by the logic of the mode (or modes) of production in play at a given conjuncture, then we must conclude that the logic of patriarchy, or of the distinct historical forms of women's subordination to men, also cannot be understood apart from their deployment within radically historical social formations. Any form of subordination of women to men is historical and will necessarily function according to the logic of the particular social formation in which it is inscribed. In order to get at the historicity of patriarchy, it is necessary to identify the specific historical forms that the subordination of women has taken, and while the discovery of the origins of patriarchy is a task far beyond the scope of this project, recognizing the clash of two historical patriarchal forms in the transition is essential for addressing the issue of Sor Juana’s defense of women.

If patriarchal forms cannot exist independently of the productive logic of the social system, the following questions need to be addressed: How can the Althusserian theoretical framework of Rodríguez (as well as its subsequent development in the work of Read and also Caamaño) be further advanced to begin constructing a history of women's subordination to men according to the internal logic of distinct modes of production? How, for example, did women's subordination change during the period of the transition from feudalism to capitalism? With respect to the very specific task of historicizing Sor Juana's textual production, the analysis of her writing represents an opportunity to expand the explanatory reach of the present theoretical framework as we attempt to discover the historicity of the nun's well-known but often misinterpreted defense of women. Rejecting the dual-systems approach to the analysis of patriarchy, this concluding chapter aims to identify some of the political and economic reasons for women's subordination during the period of the transition in order to then examine the ways this subordination was shaped and also resisted in the ideological production of the moment. Sor Juana’s reaction to the transitional treatment and definition of women is again revealing of the contradictions that marked the period.

In Murray's analysis of patriarchy during the transition she summarizes the conclusions of previous scholarship on this topic. Quoting Shulamith Firestone, she highlights the central role that women's reproductive capacity has played in shaping women's history:

> So that just as to assure elimination of economic classes requires the revolt of the underclass (the proletariat) and, in a temporary dictatorship, their seizure of the means of *production*, so to assure the elimination of sexual classes requires the revolt of the underclass (women) and seizure of control of *reproduction.* (22)

This quote is interesting with respect to the present discussion because it is a reminder that reproduction must be harnessed and controlled in order to change the organization of society. The implications for the period of the transition are great; in order for one mode of production to rout another, not only do the *relations of production* have to undergo a transformation, but the *relations of reproduction* as well. In short, in order for capitalist relations to take the place of feudal ones, women's reproductive capacity must be rechanneled according to the logic of a new set of social relations. What has to be worked out is the historical specificity of the need to control women's bodies at this particular conjuncture, for what is clear is that both the aristocratic class and the emergent bourgeoisie needed to control women's bodies and the reproductive process. What may not be so immediately apprehensible are the specific reasons *why*, beyond the fact that every mode of production needs to find a way to regulate reproduction in accordance with its logic. It will also be important to ask *how* control was achieved—by what mechanisms. The key is to theorize the distinct logic of the necessity to control women's bodies that defines each of these dominant classes and the modes of production they represent. The questions raised will always be a matter of radical historicity, questions not only regarding the radical historicity of the texts being analyzed, but also extending to the particular historical problem of *the transition* in general that manifests itself at different sites, in this case, in the bodies of women. The same ideological transformation that Rodríguez describes between the notions of *serf* and *subject* can also be examined with respect to the distinct notions of *woman* produced by different social systems:

> If the serf remains bound substantially to the earth and to the lord, it is not possible to inscribe him within the limits of capitalism [...] Bourgeois ideology, we are saying, needs

> to convert the serf into the proletarian, that is, into the *free subject*, in possession at least of his/her own inner truth (in this case, labor power), therefore, freely disposed to sell it in exchange for a wage. (*Theory* 18)

Just as bourgeois relations of production will require that the *feudal serf* be transformed into the *free subject*, they will also require that women's bodies be transformed from *reproducers of lineage* into *reproducers of free subjects*. In order to explain the productive logic of the discourses on women represented in a wide range of transitional texts, the majority of which provided ideological justification for the subjugation of women to men, it is necessary to consider the interaction (economic, political and ideological) of the two modes of production which are vying for control of both *production and reproduction* during this period.

From the perspective of an Althusserian problematic, the construction of a theory of women's history can't begin with the women themselves or the notion that we are studying the history of women's agency. Instead, it is crucial to start by examining the exploitative logic of the social systems in question and the specific place(s) that women occupy within such historical systems. In the case of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, we are obligated to observe not only how women's experiences manifested the particular forms of class struggle associated with each distinct economic system, but also the ways in which the historical contradiction between these two systems determined the lives of women and their textual production. Traditionally, bourgeois versions of history represented the transition to the modern era and to capitalism as having benefited men and women alike as they emerged from the tenebrous Middle Ages. In the past decades, however, multiple feminist critics have questioned whether or not women's lives were actually improved in the transition to bourgeois capitalist society. Joan Kelly-Gadol's essay, “Did Women Have a Renaissance?”, for example, examines the “new constraints suffered by Renaissance women as the family and political life were restructured in the great transition from medieval feudal society to the early modern state” (Kelly-Gadol). She contends that women, as a group, both those pertaining to the rising bourgeoisie and those representing the nobility faced a situation marked by a heightened patriarchal outlook and new forms of subordination, in particular their ever increasing removal from public life and the insistence upon female dependency. Other scholars such as Heath

Dillard, author of *Daughters of the Reconquest*, and Mar Martínez-Góngora who writes about the ways in which women were portrayed in both humanist and scholastic treatises during the period of the Renaissance, also provide convincing evidence defending the position that women were subjected to more stringent and pervasive forms of subordination in the transition to the modern period. Each of these texts includes vivid descriptions of women's experiences that strongly imply that traditional versions of history have served to distort the reality of women's history.

During the period of the transition the topic of women and in particular, the definition and rightful place of women became part of an on-going debate that would eventually be referred to as *The Woman Question* or the *Querelle de femmes.* This phenomenon produced a rash of treatises that document a debate on the nature of women that began in the 14th century and extended well into the 18th century. In the opening chapter of her book, *Women in European History*, Gisela Boch describes the arguments of various participants in the debate on women, ranging from the most strident misogynists to incensed noblewomen, much like Sor Juana herself, who attempted to defend themselves and other women against the onslaught of treatises some of which questioned even whether or not women were actually human. Participation in the debate was extensive, including scholastic and humanist opinions, Protestant and Catholic views, and the voices of men and women of the educated classes. Boch describes the querelle as having had a major ideological impact: "The *querelle des sexes*, which shaped early modern culture more than any subject, dealt with the dignity and virtue of the 'other' sex, with its inferiority, superiority, equivalence or equality *vis-a-vis* its male counterpart"(3). What is clear from Boch's description is the fact of the pervasiveness of the impetus to define women and women's roles during the period in question. Also apparent in her description is the fact that the debate was fraught with the same ideological contradictions that characterized the literature examined thus far in the present discussion. The weakness of Boch's interesting account of the debate is that her description does little to help her readers understand the real historical reasons for the occurrence of the *querelle*. In some ways, her presentation tends to distort the history of the debate; because of the fact that she very democratically sketches the distinct perspectives of the various contributing groups and

individuals, it is difficult to decipher any sort of organization into hegemonic versus oppositional voices, let alone understandthe specific ideological extraction of differing opinions about women. There is no real attempt made to anchor the debate historically. Although Boch does portray women in general (whose participation she admits was very limited) as a nucleus of opposition to misogyny, the historical causes for the debate and the logic of its texts are not examined, except to be attributed to "the influence of humanism and religious reform" (1). In order to comprehend the logic of Sor Juana's defense of women, it is helpful to first sort out the historical logic of both the emergence of the debate on *The Woman Question*, at least within the context of Spain and New Spain, as well as the main ideological currents operating within this debate.

Mar Martínez-Góngora, another scholar whose work engages some of the Spanish texts involved in the *querelle*, does make an effort to understand the historical reasons for which the texts she analyzes insisted upon the inferiority of women. Her book on the subject, *Discursos sobre la mujer en el Humanismo renacentista español. Los casos de Antonio de Guevara, Alfonso y Juan de Valdés y Luis de León.*, represents an attempt to set the record straight, so to speak, with regard to the Renaissance and women. Her first concern is to establish, in contrast to popular wisdom on the subject, that the Renaissance did not in fact bring about extensive positive social changes for women, but rather, that this period marked an increase in the severity of women's subjugation to men. In her introduction she makes the assertion that beginning in the 14th century, "la situación de las mujeres empeoró de manera considerable con el advenimiento del mercantilismo" (Martínez-Góngora 2) and she goes on to say that

> A este empeoramiento de la situación contribuyó en gran medida la creación y difusión de discursos ideológicos que, favoreciendo el afianzamiento de las estructuras patriarcales, fomentaban la exclusión de las mujeres de la esfera pública. Los discursos a través de los que la ideología de la distribución de los roles sexuales quedó establecida fueron elaborados tanto por los teólogos y moralistas de la Contrarreforma como por las humanistas. (3)[49]

[49] Although she does not attempt an analysis of root causes, Boch's chapter on the querelle also corroborates Martínez-Góngora's assertion that the Reformation did not bring about real or lasting equality for women:

> Protestantism changed considerably after its rebellious beginnings. Behind the new disciplinary order in

Martínez-Góngora's book begins by emphasizing that the humanist scholars were as implicated in the subordination of women as were their scholastic counterparts, but what is also clear in her opening description of their texts is that a new kind of patriarchal system was being forged, and as recognized in the quote above, one that will be concerned to relegate women to the private sphere. According to Martínez-Góngora, during the transition there seemed to be growing general agreement on all sides, that is, from the various and contradictory epicenters of aristocratic, clerical and bourgeois powers, about women's inferiority to men and the need for their subordination to masculine authority: "se construyó en el siglo XVI un sistema de las funciones sociales que aseguraba a los individuos masculinos un control absoluto sobre las mujeres" (12). Martínez-Góngora's book is focused on explaining a very specific phenomenon—the full participation of humanist scholars in the clampdown upon women witnessed in this period. The critic is interested to work out why both feudalizing ideologues as well as those whose writing ultimately bolstered bourgeois relations seem to have agreed so completely upon the question of women's inferiority.

Interestingly, Martínez-Góngora borrows many ideas from Rodriguez's *Theory and History of Ideological Production* in her attempt to generate a historical explanation for the transitional clampdown on women. She builds her discussion around the notions of *ideology* and *contradiction* maintaining that the humanist ideologues she writes about were simultaneously responding to the logic of two opposing modes of production. She also recognizes in her argument the impact of both Platonizing and Aristotelian discourses, the centralizing role of the Absolutist State and the new division between the public and private spheres. Moreover, Martínez-Góngora observes the contradictory "pact" that developed between the aristocratic class and the bourgeoisie—a pact that was mutually beneficial for a time, but that in the end served to undo the feudal edifice. In addition to providing numerous examples of the negative arguments about women that appeared during the period of the transition (all part of the afore-mentioned *querelle*), Martínez-Góngora successfully gathers

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> Protestant cities and the elimination of the 'women's houses', the houses for urban prostitutes, stood the old picture of the sexually insatiable and domineering woman. In the end the Reformation, which at first had propagated the same sexual ethics for both sexes and the dignity of the married woman, suspected all women, single or married, of being ever ready to surrender themselves to their lust for debauchery. (23)

together much evidence that is helpful for formulating an explanation for the specific and ferocious subjugation of women to men that characterized the period. Unfortunately, however, the critic's conclusions regarding *why* women were so severely subjugated by men on all sides during the period of the transition are somewhat disappointing. In the end, her final analysis of the situation digresses into a subject-centered explanation as she determines that the causal force behind the phenomenon of the clampdown was what she terms the "crisis of masculine identity" that was occurring as a result of the transition from feudalism to capitalism.

With respect to the specific work of the humanists, Martínez-Góngora argues that it was their own semi-precarious social status (their particular crisis of masculinity) that caused them, as a group, to assert the inferiority of women in order to negotiate a better and more stable status for themselves. Although her book details primarily the arguments of humanist scholars, she is careful to point out that the scholastics too, were increasingly adamant throughout the same period about demonstrating the inferiority of women to men. For Martínez-Góngora, the arguments of both of these groups were constructed somewhat differently depending upon their class-allegiance, but in the end, they were all the result of the same "crisis of masculinity" that was being suffered by all men during the transition from feudal to bourgeois relations. The following quote summarizes Martínez-Góngora's thesis regarding the clampdown on women as she develops it early in her text:

> En todos los casos, son los temas relacionados con la mujer, su educación, el matrimonio y la familia, los que van a resultar más útiles al humanista tanto para dar cabida al aparato ideológico cuya difusión hace justificar su función social como a la hora de expresar su desencanto ante la difícil situación social. (29)

And in the conclusion to her book the critic states that

> La construcción del modelo de mujer que aparece en los textos de estos humanistas se relaciona con la crisis de identidad masculina que afecta al ciudadano renacentista […] La radicalización de las actitudes hacia la mujer que el estudio de estas obras exhibe se realiza de una manera directamente proporcional al grado de identificación de los autores con el sector femenino y el de sofisticación de los discursos. La identificación de los humanistas con las mujeres como individuos al margen del poder masculino provoca

> en los mismos el deseo de distanciamiento con la experiencia femenina. De esta manera la posible crisis de masculinidad que nace de la identificación con lo femenino y que provoca el distanciamiento con las mujeres se va a intentar resolver mediante el ejercicio del control sobre las mismas. (207-13)

While it may be true that the humanist scholars whose work Martínez-Góngora examines did experience a certain crisis of masculine identity that can be ascribed to the shifting terrain of the transition, it is quite problematic to identify this crisis of identity as the primary causal force behind their arguments for the subordination of women. To make the assertion that the ideologues of emerging bourgeois relations were so severely critical of women because of a desire to distance themselves from and take out their personal frustrations upon women is to create an argument that again makes the mistake of elevating too much of the logic of textual production to the conscious level. What is made clear in such an assertion is the fact that Martínez-Góngora hasn't adopted the central concept of Rodriguez's theoretical apparatus, the notion of the *ideological unconscious*. Without this notion Martínez-Góngora is obligated to explain the situation of women in the transition as one that resulted directly from men's personal feelings of resentment regarding their marginalization. The problems in Martínez-Góngora's argument occur at least in part because she mines Rodríguez's text more for historical data than for theoretical concepts, in this way limiting the scope of her notions of causality and the explanatory power of her thesis. In spite of the fact that she has gathered in the historical data necessary for constructing a powerful structural explanation of women's subordination, Martínez-Góngora's theoretical apparatus falls short of the task. Her text is adept at tracing the real connections between the political interests of the humanist scholars she researches (many of them *conversos* or of otherwise questionable lineage) and the interests of the emerging bourgeoisie. Given this overlap it does make sense that in many cases the humanist arguments would have served to legitimize the development of bourgeois social relations including the creation of the bourgeois nuclear family and its specific roles for men and women. What is not so clearly explained in Martínez-Góngora's arguments, however, is why the bourgeois family had to be configured in the

particular way it was with men as the absolute heads of household and women subordinated and relegated to the private/domestic space.

Although Rodríguez's work on the transition does not focus specifically on women's history and only includes infrequent statements on this topic, he does make an important observation about the experiences of women that both affirms the claims of feminist scholars who refute the traditional view of women's history and once again underscores the logic of feudal versus capitalist social relations as the key to unraveling questions about the transformation of patriarchal struggles during the period of the transition. In a passage contrasting bourgeois and feudal ideology, Rodríguez makes the claim that in the feudal world a woman's lineage or blood far out-weighed the importance of her gender:

> It is precisely 'reformist/bourgeois' morality, with its special conception of the family and of woman, which prevents women from appearing as 'public.' (For the reformist nations, one might say, the human condition is emphatically marked for gender). Organicism, on the other hand, which views substantiality and honor as fundamental, is relatively indifferent to sex. […] Sex, as a basic determinant of the subject, properly belongs to the 'private/intimate' domain -the ideology of the family, etc. -and, for this reason, should not accede to the public level. For feudalizing ideology, on the other hand, it is clear that the question of whether a woman can or cannot occupy a public place is decided on the basis of her blood. (*Theory* 86)

Rodríguez recognizes that the family as well as the notion of gender itself have to be examined as inventions of the bourgeois ideological matrix. In the same way that his theoretical problematic insists upon the radical historicity of ideological production, we must also insist upon the historicity of the distinct forms of women's subordination to men, viewing each as symptomatic of the particular social formation (mode of production/mode of reproduction) in which it appears. The subordination of women to men during the feudal period was necessarily tied to the issue of lineage. In feudal society, women's bodies were the site of the reproduction not only of the labor force (the peasantry) and the exploiting classes (the nobility and the clergy), but also of the key ideological category of lineage. Given the fact that one's blood was equal to one's social status in the feudal hierarchy, it is not difficult to see why women's bodies

had to be protected from those who might compromise the purity of one's line of descendants; at times, this could translate into the notion that women also had to be protected even from themselves. Thus, we observe the physical violence associated with the feudal cleansing of one's honor/blood, a violence oftentimes suffered upon women whose bodies represented the locus of honor. The preservation of lineage, or the preservation of the feudal structure, provides the basic logic for women's subordination to men during the feudal period. Women's subordination in the subsequent capitalist system was very different, however, and although Rodríguez has named one of the historical mechanisms—*gender*—through which the bourgeois subordination of women was achieved, his text does not develop the issue further to discuss why the category of gender emerges as it does during the transition to bourgeois society.

Understanding the reasons for the Inquisitional clampdown upon women is perhaps a bit easier than comprehending the logic of the bourgeois repression of women upon the emergence of capitalist relations, especially given the fact that many histories still support the idea that men and women alike benefitted from the renaissance and the transition into the modern era. For such histories, the feudal period is depicted as a time when gender relations were necessarily more patriarchal. During the Middle Ages, however, previous to the moment of transition and crisis, the fact that women's' bodies had to be guarded against the besmirching of honor (i.e., the marring of bloodlines) did not necessarily translate into the total subordination of women under men as is commonly supposed. In point of fact, Martínez-Góngora agrees with Ortega Costa when she points out that

> En España, en concreto, al principio de la Edad Moderna las mujeres gozaban de igualdad de derechos con respecto a los hombres en materia económica y de las mismas oportunidades en el terreno laboral que sus compañeros. Los documentos muestran que la mujer realizaba todo tipo de transacciones comerciales utilizando su propio nombre. También el sistema de herencia establecido por el *Liber Judicorum* garantizaba la absoluta igualdad entre hombres y mujeres' (2)

For those of us who have been steeped in an official history whose narrative still includes the passage from the "Dark Ages" into the illumination of the "Renaissance", the use of the word "equality" as a descriptor for the relationship between the men and women of a feudal society

may be quite surprising. The above passage on the feudal treatment of women seems to suggest, however, that the poor treatment of women traditionally associated with the Middle Ages, may in fact be a more accurate description of the moment of the transition than it is for earlier feudal society; only upon entering a period of crisis did the feudal system have the need to subordinate women to men with the same ferocity that will characterize the first bourgeois treatises on women. The crisis of the feudal system was a crisis that implicated not only a mode of production but one of reproduction as well.

At this point, it is necessary to return to the issue of two contradictory social systems, feudal and capitalist, vying for dominance and thus engaged in struggle at the economic, political and ideological levels. In the history of the transition, women's bodies represent but one of many sites of class struggle. Both men and women were then and are of course always involved in the process of the reproduction of both the forces and relations of production, and accordingly, their reproductive capacities must always be configured according to the logic of a given system in order for that system to perpetuate itself. When we look at the specific case of women during the transition, it becomes clear that at the advent of bourgeois relations, certain women, namely noblewomen, were not, in theory, accessible (as wives) to the rising merchant class. Given the fact that the exploitative classes of feudal society were defined and legitimized by their blood, they were necessarily loath to compromise their status by marrying below their pedigree. As the struggle between feudal society and the emerging capitalist system continued, however, and the feudal structure fell deeper into economic and political crisis, new alliances as well as new contradictions appeared. Following Peter Kriedte's analysis, Resch describes the kind of symbiotic but contradictory relationship that developed for a time between the upper classes of the two systems:

> Merchant wealth meant not only an increasing subordination of craft guilds to their merchant counterparts but also a growing interaction of bourgeois and aristocratic accumulation (the wealthy merchants became tax farmers, revenue collectors, and administrators as well as bankers for the landed classes and the Church). Merchant accumulation translated into royal and aristocratic loans, which in turn produced increased monopoly prerogatives, aristocratic marriages, and the acquisition of

> seigneurial land holdings for the commercial bourgeoisie. The rise of mercantile fortunes, Kriedte concludes, was not necessarily revolutionary for the feudal mode of production. The life-style and status of the aristocracy remained the 'sun' for the highest ranks of the merchant class, which was more prone to the temptations of 'feudalization,' buying seigneurial property, acquiring aristocratic titles, and so on, than to the hazardous and as yet relatively unprofitable task of pushing beyond commercial and financial activities toward the development of capitalist manufacturing. (145)

Resch describes a situation in which the feudal aristocracy found itself obligated to depend upon the wealth of the members of the merchant class, who in turn took advantage of the historical conjuncture in order to insert themselves into the aristocracy, although they lacked the key qualification of sufficient pedigree. The mechanisms by which the merchant class was able to achieve a certain aristocratic status for a time are clearly defined here, and that of marriage is of particular interest to the present discussion.

In order for the kind of marriage that Resch describes to occur, in other words, marriage between members of the aristocratic and the merchant classes, the notion of lineage must already have suffered significant compromise. Indeed, the period of the transition could be described as a period marking the diluting of blue blood. Although she does not examine the issue of mixing unequal bloodlines in the course of her arguments, Martínez-Góngora takes us to the heart of the matter when she describes the reconstitution of feminine identity happening during the transition:

> Respondiendo entonces a las necesidades de la burguesía, el escritor presenta un modelo de mujer de condición media, ni muy rica ni muy hermosa, que constituye la esposa perfecta del burgués. El modelo de mujer tanto de Guevara como de fray Luis de León es válido para todas las clases sociales, siendo la labor doméstica, que constituye el deber ineludible de toda mujer casada, la fuerza que erradica la diferencia social. (208)

Martínez-Góngora makes a very important observation when she points out that the new model for woman was a universal model designating the role of women across the social spectrum. The eradication of difference that Martínez-Góngora describes is key; the eventual result of the wide-scale proliferation of treatises positing the inferiority of women to men was

the erasure of women's class status according to the old hierarchy. If we consider this statement again in relationship to the struggle for dominance between the two systems in question, it becomes clear that in order for bourgeois relations to eventually gain control, bloodlines had to be interrupted and lineage-based relations destroyed. One way for the emergent bourgeoisie to mar pure lineages was to gain access to the women of the noble class. In effect, all women had to be made accessible (at least in theory) to all men in order to further rupture the feudal hierarchy by erasing the distinction between the aristocratic and bourgeois classes. This was achieved during the transition by the equating and demoting of all women, redefining them in opposition to the superior male gender.

At the level of ideological production, it is not at all surprising to discover that along with the widespread effort to define and tightly manage women during this period, we also observe a plethora of discussions on marriage. Within the *Querelle de femmes*, two major currents can be identified—texts that tend toward elucidating a still feudalizing notion of woman and texts that tend to define women more according to the new logic of the bourgeois family. As might be expected, in the more humanist current that served to legitimize the new relations of production, the virtue of the woman was posited as more important than her pedigree, and the goal of the industrious man should be to marry such a virtuous woman. Martínez-Góngora's study includes extensive citations from the texts of the period demonstrating the reconfiguration of marriage. The following is a quote by Juan de Valdés:

> Más no sea lícito y honesto a las mujeres escoger el marido que ellas quieren, mas parecen obligadas a tomar el que sus padres, hermanos o parientes quieren darlo aunque pocas veces le rogaua que no mirassen al linaje ni a bienes mundanos ni a hermosura de su cuerpo, sino a las virtudes del ánima, porque con éstas me entendía yo casar (*Diálogo de Mercurio*, Ricapito 266). (Valdés qtd. in Martínez-Góngora 97)

In the above quote, the displacement of lineage is very clear.

Marriage was often defended in such texts as the best state, the most Christian of states, even more so than monastic life, in texts that produced the new notion of the nuclear family (Martínez-Góngora 88). Such arguments always reflected the need, at the level of the social structure, of the emerging bourgeoisie to mix its blood with the aristocratic class as

quickly as possible and on a large scale. In light of this reality, the logic informing the attack on chastity and monastic life becomes clear. Within the feudal social formation, the convent can be understood as a kind of repository of surplus blue blood or surplus honor as it was often the home of unmarried aristocratic women. During the transition, this function of the convent becomes increasingly obsolete as the notion of the convent collides with bourgeois ideology. Martínez-Góngora notes that in the humanist treatises she studies, convents are often portrayed as negative, corrupt, even abominable places (88). Again, the drive at the structural level on the part of bourgeois relations to rout lineage-based relations is clear. Lisa Vollendorf in *The Lives of Women*, summarizes the thrust of the texts in question:

> Most famously espoused by Fray Luis de León in *The Perfect Wife*, the notion that women should receive training to make them efficient household managers, obedient domestic partners, and good Christians permeated Renaissance humanist discourse. [...] In the early modern period, innumerable writers weighed in on the topics of women's spiritual and domestic instruction. [...] As Pilar Tenorio Gómez summarizes, most moralists wanted women to be 'silent, humble, virtuous, obedient, and above all, married.' (172)

In direct opposition to the feudal ideal of virginal perfection, the perfect woman was now the married woman. To be clear, we are not claiming that the routing of lineage-based relations was a process that occurred as a result of a conscious conspiracy on the part of the bourgeoisie. On the contrary, as Resch's passage explains, the early alliances between the aristocracy and the merchant class were generally not part of a conscious revolutionary impulse. What we are discussing here are the symptoms of structural changes at a specific historical conjuncture.

During this conjuncture feudal or scholastic ideologues were also adamant about their views regarding the subject of marriage. They too participated in the transitional clampdown on women, but the logic of their treatises was distinct from that of their humanist counterparts. In response to the erosion of the feudal structure and the marring of aristocratic bloodlines the texts of the scholastics emphasized the need to tighten the rules on marriage, making it more difficult for marriage to occur without the prior blessing of parents and the oversight of the Church. At the Council of Trent it was decided that marriage should now be exclusively public

and a clergy member must be present for a marriage to be officially recognized (Martínez-Góngora 98). Celibacy and virginity maintained their status as holier than the state of marriage, but the sacramental nature of marriage was reaffirmed as was the notion that marriage must be carried out in accordance with Catholic decree and not in secret (97-9). Sexual activity was highly regulated and deviant sexual activity was, of course, punishable. The inferiority of women that was proclaimed in the more feudalizing current of the *Querelle* tended to blame sinful and loose women for the decadent state of society and advocated tighter control by families, the Church, and last but not least, men over their women.

4.3 Women at a loss

For the women writers who took up the pen during the transition in order to attempt to defend feminine erudition, it is apparent that neither the scholastic nor the humanist arguments afforded them with an acceptable definition of women; the major currents within the *querelle* most often presented them with greater obstacles with respect to their formal education and participation in the world of letters. Much of the scholarship on the women writers of the period has focused on the fact that they were often women who demanded to be heard and respected at a time when misogyny was rampant, and given this scenario, women such as Sor Juana have come to be understood as marginalized and visionary, as discussed in Chapter Two. But contrary to much of the existing scholarship on Sor Juana and her fellow women writers, in all actuality they can be more accurately described as brave women who, when caught in the crossfire of the double clampdown that occurred during the transition, looked more to the past rather than to the future in order to justify their complaints regarding their mistreatment. As we have seen in earlier chapters, Sor Juana's writing is in many aspects still heavily feudalizing, and the same is true of her understanding and defense of women. When Sor Juana speaks directly about the topic of women her arguments take shape according to the ideological matrices present in her historical moment and are very often of a more feudalizing rather than a modernizing extraction. When Sor Juana defended women and women's education she did so in reaction to the clampdown that had imposed new and more

severe restrictions on women, restrictions that a woman of her status and education would of course reject—and as a woman who still defined herself more in terms of *substance* than according to the notion of *gender* that would imply a strict separation between the sexes. For Sor Juana, those whose God-given *nature* or *inclination* was to study should of course do so, and generally speaking, members of the upper classes and members of the clergy should be educated. As a representative of both of these groups, she considered herself doubly called to this task. Unfortunately for Sor Juana, the role of women, along with the social formation as a whole, was undergoing a great transformation and one that meant an increased subjugation of women.

As Sor Juana formulated her self-defense she did not need to look far into the past to find examples of religious women who were encouraged to participate in scholarly activity within the context of the Church. Citing Weber's work, Martínez-Góngora explains that during the first half of the 16th century there was an evangelical movement in the Catholic Church that produced a great number of texts, many of which were written by women: "El Cardenal Cisneros, antiguo confesor de la reina Isabel la Católica, apoyó con entusiasmo la piedad femenina. Muchas de las reformas monásticas estaban específicamente dirigidas a mejorar la vida religiosa de monjas y terciarias (Weber 22)" (3). During the Counter-Reformation, however, the attitude toward women changed and was replaced by much skepticism regarding feminine spirituality; as Martínez-Góngora states, "la pérdida de status social que sufre la mujer durante el siglo XVI también se aprecia con respecto a la cuestión de la espiritualidad femenina" (2-3). The same loss of status for women that Martínez-Góngora observes in the textual production of Spain during the Renaissance can also be observed in Sor Juana's own writing. In *La Respuesta*, in particular, Sor Juana argues upon multiple occasions the case for women's erudition referring to numerous examples of learned women from the past. Throughout her arguments in *La Respuesta* she seems somewhat baffled by the way women are being treated, and given the situation, she feels the need to remind her superiors in the Church hierarchy about the important roles women have played in the past. In keeping with her insistence upon the compelling nature of her inclination to study, she remarks that she has

never depended upon the examples of women from the past to motivate her; nevertheless, and as she elucidates, many good examples did exist:

> Porque veo a una Débora dando leyes, así en lo militar como en lo político, y gobernando el pueblo donde había tantos varones doctos. Veo una sapientísima reina de Sabá, tan docta que se atreve a tentar con enigmas la sabiduría del mayor de los sabios […] Veo tantas y tan insignes mujeres: unas adornadas con el don de la profecía, como una Abigaíl; otras de persuasión, como Ester; otras de piedad, como Rahab, otras de perseverancia, como Ana, madre de Samuel, y otras infinitas y en otras especies de prendas y virtudes. (*Woman* 65)

The passage continues to name various other famed and respected women, many of them "mujeres doctas" like herself who knew how to "leer, escribir, enseñar" as well as "inerpretar las Escrituras" (67). This section, along with others in her letter, is dedicated to reminding her detractors of the fact that learned women have a place in the ecclesiastic hierarchy and that they should not be excluded from scholarly practices. They were not excluded in the past and they should not be now.

Another quote from Martínez-Góngora's text further illuminates the deteriorating situation of women during the early part of the transition. Martínez-Góngora explains that Antonio de Guevara advocated for the instruction of women, but that his stance on their education represented a marginal viewpoint:

> Guevara pasa su período de formación en un ambiente donde el estudio era fomentado por el poder. La Reina Isabel se da cuenta de la importancia de elevar el nivel cultural de la nobleza incluyendo al mismo tiempo a la mujer […] La gramática latina de Nebrija de 1486 constaba de una traducción castellana con el fin de que las mujeres pudieran aprender latín por sí solas, sin necesidad de hombres (Gil 309). Desde el año 1487, Beatriz Galindo, la 'Latina,' era profesora de la reina y ésta al mismo tiempo trata de promover la educación de las monjas haciéndolas aprender latín (310). Se puede hablar de un retroceso en cuanto a la importancia de esta educación femenina a través de los que sucedía en cortes de reyes sucesivos y Guevara no puede dejar de denunciar este hecho. En el momento en que Guevara escribe y publica gran parte de su obra la

> valoración de instrucción a las mujeres había pasado. Carlos V sostiene una total falta de interés por la educación intelectual de sus hijas y la situación se va a agravar en reinados sucesivos donde las mujeres cortesanas no sólo no aprendían latín sino no siquiera a escribir con soltura (Gil 310-312). (65)

Just as was the case for Guevara, Sor Juana was also advocating for women's education in a moment when as Martínez-Góngora points out, "la valoración de instrucción a las mujeres había pasado" (65). Such ideas were simply not part of the agenda of the period of resurgent feudalism during which Sor Juana lived. As the first half of this chapter explains, when the feudal system was in decline, one of the symptoms of its attempt to survive was the restriction of women's activities. Sor Juana's *Respuesta* offers a critique of the resulting situation underscoring certain problems created by the lack of erudite women. Her critique of the scenario is centered on the question of women's honor and the fact that honor is at risk whenever young women are obligated to study with male teachers. When Sor Juana explains that for parents who do wish to educate their girls few prudent options are available, her letter reveals some of the realities of the historical moment:

> [L]es fuerza la necesidad y falta de ancianas sabias a llevar maestros hombres a enseñar a leer, escribir y contar, a tocar y otras habilidades, de que no pocos daños resultan, como se experimentan cada día en lastimosos ejemplos de desiguales consorcios, porque con la inmediación del trato y la comunicación del tiempo, suele hacerse fácil lo que no se pensó ser posible. Por lo cual muchos quieren más dejar bárbaras e incultas a sus hijas que no exponerlas a tan notorio peligro como la familiaridad con los hombres, lo cual se excusara si hubiera ancianas doctas, como quiere San Pablo, y de unas en otras fuese sucediendo el magisterio como sucede en el de hacer labores y lo demás que es costumbre. (*Woman* 75)

A few paragraphs later, Sor Juana reiterates the danger posed by men teaching women and again blames the current shortage of women teachers:

> Y no hallo yo que este modo de enseñar de hombres a mujeres pueda ser sin peligro, si no es en el severo tribunal de un confesionario o en la distante docencia de los púlpitos o en el remoto conocimiento de los libros; pero no en el manoseo de la inmediación. Y

> todos conocen que esto es verdad; y con todo, se permite sólo por el defecto de no haber ancianas sabias. (77)

The lack of erudite women is presented here as a defect in current Church practices, and this entire section of *La Respuesta* develops the argument that certain women should be educated in order to fulfill the task of instructing other women, always emphasizing the fact that this is in accordance with how things were done in the past. Sor Juana's defense of women consistently registers the same worsening situation for women charted in Martínez-Góngora's text as well as those of others like Joan Kelly-Gadol who have revisited this period to question the notion that the Renaissance represented improved conditions for women.

In a letter that Sor Juana wrote to her confessor, Núñez de Miranda, some ten years before she addressed *La Respuesta* to the Bishop of Puebla, she expressed forcefully not only her opposition to the prohibition of study for women but also a great degree of mystification regarding such decrees. Her questions to Núñez de Miranda bring up the issue of the division between public and private spheres, a topic we shall return to again further on. At this point, the following quote serves to further demonstrate that Sor Juana's writing represents a reaction against the clampdown on women:

> [...] pero los privados y particulares estudios ¿quién los ha prohibido a las mujeres? ¿No tienen alma racional como los hombres? ¿Pues por qué no gozará el privilegio de la ilustración de las letras con ellas? ¿No es capaz de tanta gracia y gloria de Dios como la suya? ¿Pues por qué no será capaz de tántas noticias y ciencias que es menos? ¿Qué revelación divina, qué determinación de la Iglesia, qué dictamen de la razón hizo para nosotras tan severa ley? ("Carta" 642)

Here, Sor Juana seems to be wondering since when the Church has taken such a stance against women and their ability to study and learn. Her arguments show clearly that she perceives Núñez de Miranda's position as representative of a change in Church precepts regarding women. She goes on to ask another series of questions related to erudition and salvation:

> ¿Las letras estorban, sino que antes ayudaban a la salvación? ¿No se salvó San Agustín, San Ambrosio y todos los demás Santos Doctos? Y V. R. cargado de tántas letras, no piensa salvarse? Y si me responde que en los hombres milita otra razón, digo: ¿No

> estudió Santa Catalina, Santa Gertrudis, mi Madre Santa Paula sin estorbarle a su alta contemplación, ni a la fatiga de sus fundaciones el saber hasta griego? ¿El aprender hebreo? ¿Enseñada de mi Padre San Jerónimo, el resolver y el entender las Santas Escrituras, como el mismo santo lo dice? [...] ¿Por qué en mí es malo lo que en todas fue bueno? ¿Sólo a mí me estorban los libros para salvarme? (642-3)

Again, Sor Juana defends her position with a list of erudite women who had gone before her and who the Church held in esteem. The above passage makes plain that Sor Juana was comparing the Church "now" to the Church back "then" and finding the present situation unacceptable.

The purpose of Sor Juana's letter to Núñez de Miranda was to officially relieve him of the task of serving as her confessor. Her letter details her reasons for dismissing him, the primary reason being that he was constantly admonishing her both publicly and privately for her scholarly activities and her frequent correspondence with the viceregal palace (644-5). Sor Juana expresses vividly her sense of obligation and her responsibility to serve both her superiors in the Church as well as those at the palace. Her letter explains that she has been under great pressure from Núñez de Miranda to respond exclusively to the counsel of her superiors in the Church, namely himself, and to abandon any extra-ecclesiastical activities, in particular the writing and publication of poetry. Throughout the letter, however, Sor Juana's confidence in the legitimacy of her position is palpable. Although she has contemplated the advice of her confessor, she has decided not to follow his recommendations. At this point in her life, Sor Juana was a woman who was sufficiently undaunted by the power that Núñez de Miranda represented to be able to rebuke his harsh treatment:

> Pero a V. R. no puedo dejar de decirle que robosan ya en el pecho las quejas que en espacio de los años pudiera haber dado y que pues tomo la pluma para darlas redarguyendo a quien tánto venero, es porque ya no puedo más, que como no soy tan mortificada como otras hijas en quien se empleara mejor su doctrina, lo siento demasiado. (645)

She felt unable to continue under his guidance and, as the opening section of her letter states, she was acting according to her free will: "Pues, Padre amantísimo (a quien forzada y con

vergüenza insto lo que no quisiera tomar en boca), ¿cuál era el dominio directo que tenía V. R. para disponer de mi persona y del albedrío (sacando el que mi amor le daba y le dará siempre) que Dios me dio?" (643-4). In addition to asserting her privilege to use her free will, she also asserts her reliance upon reason: "ni yo tengo tan servil naturaleza que haga por amenazas lo que no me persuade la razón" (644). The voice that presents itself in this letter hardly seems that of a woman who sensed herself as marginalized and without power. By the time she wrote *La Respuesta* almost ten years later, however, her personal distress regarding the ever more severe treatment of women is visibly increased, but in the case of both letters, Sor Juana remains steadfast in her arguments against the shift that was occurring.

In both of her letters it is clear that Sor Juana's vision of the Church and her place within it did not always correspond to her lived reality. Although her arguments against women's subordination have led to many analyses that posit Sor Juana as a progressive thinker whose ideas reflected some of the values of the modern era, there is much evidence that Sor Juana was consistently referring to the past when she voiced her protest and proposed a different treatment for certain women. In her letter to Núñez de Miranda there is another interesting passage that could be easily mistaken for advocating a very modernizing version of the Church. As Sor Juana justifies her separation from her confessor she reminds him that there are in fact many paths to heaven:

> Y así le suplico que V. R. que si no gusta ni es ya servido favorecerme (que eso es voluntario) no se acuerde de mí, que aunque sentiré tánta pérdida mucho, nunca podré quejarme, que Dios me crio y redimió, y que usa conmigo tántas misericordias, proveerá con remedio para mi alma que espera en su bondad no se perderá, aunque le falte la dirección de V. R., que del cielo hace muchas llaves y no se estrechó a un solo dictamen, sino que hay en él infinidad de mansiones para diversos genios, y en el mundo hay muchos teólogos, y cuando faltaran, en querer más que en saber consiste el salvarse y esto más estará en mí que en el confesor.
>
> ¿Qué precisión hay en que esta salvación mía sea por medio de V. R.? ¿No podrá ser otro? ¿Retringióse y limitóse la misericordia de Dios a un hombre, aunque sea tan discreto, tan docto y tan santo como V. R.? (645-6)

Ilan Stavans is one critic who has interpreted the above passage (and the letter To Núñez de Miranda in general) as forcefully progressive: "Her solution can be read as a diatribe against dogmatism in that it suggests an individualistic stand that, taken a step further, would bring laissez-faire reform" (xviii). He reads into her assertion that there are many paths to heaven a strong gesture in the direction of individualism, but this reading is problematic. As enlightened as the passage may seem, much precaution is necessary for its interpretation. When Sor Juana refers to the multiplicity of possible keys to heaven and the great number of different theologians able to procure one's salvation, her reflections indicate that her vision of the Church still corresponded to an understanding of the Church as it existed before it had fully undergone the process of centralization associated with the configuring of the Absolutist State. Instead of regarding the Church as uni-doctrinal, Sor Juana describes a body composed of diverse theological branches and different orders each emphasizing distinct expressions of service to the Lord. When Sor Juana makes the observation that there are many keys to heaven and many mansions for many different kinds of people, she is not proposing a more modern or more pluralistic understanding of Christianity, but instead asserting her freedom to choose among many existing paths within the context of the Church, the specific path best suited to her God-given inclinations. Her own experience as a nun had already proven that such freedom of choice with respect to service (*libre albedrío*) was very important[50]; upon taking her vows Sor Juana first entered the order of the Discalced Carmelites but soon found the routine too stringent and preferred instead to move to the Convent of the Order of St. Jerome where she was allowed more time for studying. The letter to Núñez de Miranda is but another example of the specific kind of flexibility that could reasonably have been expected of the Church structure prior to the centralization, reform and inquisitional clampdown that took place in the transition as part of the efforts of the Counter Reformation.

[50] The notion of libre albedrío is important as it comprises the notion of freedom as it was understood under substantialism. For feudal ideology, freedom of choice referred, in the last instance, to the freedom to choose whether or not to serve God. The freedom to choose that Sor Juana speaks of in her letter to Núñez to Miranda is an extension of this notion of choice as she explains that she is also free to choose—within certain established limits, of course—how best to serve, whether under Núñez to Miranda as her confessor or under the guidance of another.

Like Martínez-Góngora's text points out with respect to Guevara's advocacy of women's education, it is quite possible that Sor Juana's boldness in her letter to Núñez de Miranda was due in part to the fact that she had not yet realized the degree of her historical disadvantage. Mártinez-Góngora explains that in Spain, by the end of the 16th century, nuns were already losing the privilege of choosing their own confessors:

> …resulta revelador la manera en que fray Luis defiende la causa de las carmelitas acerca del mantenimiento de su más preciado privilegio: la libertad que tenía cada una de ellas para elegir su propio confesor (Guy 81). El provincial de las carmelitas, Doria, apoyado por Felipe II y el Papa Sixto V, había reorganizado la congregación imponiendo la renuncia a dicho privilegio. […] Fray Luis de León siguió luchando en defensa del derecho de las carmelitas y en ocasiones fue recibido por Felipe II en audiencia en El Escorial (Guy 82). Desgraciadamente el sucesor de Sixto V, Gregorio XIV, actuó a favor de Doria y Felipe II, revocando el decreto de su antecesor en 1591 y echando por tierra los esfuerzos de fray Luis (Guy 82). (166-7)

Near the end of her letter to Núñez de Miranda, Sor Juana explains that she is simply exercising her privilege to choose her preferred spiritual father:

> No por cierto, ni hasta ahora he tenido yo luz particular ni inspiración del Señor que así me lo ordene; conque podré gobernarme con las reglas generales de la Santa Madre Iglesia, mientras el Señor no me da luz de que haga otra cosa, y elegir libremente Padre espiritual el que yo quisiere: […] Vuelvo a repetir que mi intención es sólo suplicar a V. R. que si no gusta de favorecerme, no se acuerde de mí, si no fuere para encomendarme al Señor, que bien creo de su mucha caridad lo hará con todas veras. ("Carta" 645-6)

With these words she severed her relationship with Núñez to Miranda, but her personal battle against the clampdown on women was far from over. By the time she wrote *La Respuesta* she was clearly obligated to write a much more fully developed defense of erudition for women. The intensity of the defense found in *La Respuesta* undoubtedly tells us something about the intensification of the efforts by her superiors to subjugate her that Sor Juana had endured over the decade that separates the two texts. In the end, Sor Juana did finally submit to the mounting pressure, and when she dismantled much of her personal library she also returned to

Núñez de Miranda and asked him to become her confessor once again. At this point in her life she wrote a document that affirmed her confesion of faith and signed it with her own blood (Juana, Protesta 518-9). At the conscious level her arguments reveal her frustration with a clergy that seems to have grown exceedingly and intolerably misogynistic. On another level, her writing comprises a less cognizant but no less real rejection of the new definition of women being forged in her moment, a rejection of the imposition of the bourgeois formulation of sexual difference and the ripple effects that emerging bourgeois ideology was having upon older feudal institutions such as the Church. Sor Juana was reacting not only to the centralization of the church hierarchy and church doctrine, but also to the centralization or the polarization of sexual difference which was resulting in a new concentration of power and dominance in the masculine sign.

4.4 Sexual difference: Was Sor Juana a woman?

The letter that the Bishop of Puebla wrote to Sor Juana requesting she dedicate herself more fully to the study of the scriptures provided her with an opportunity to address the issue of women's erudition. In her response to the Bishop, Sor Juana took up the question of women directly and attempted to demonstrate that the present subordination of women was unwarranted and contrary to earlier teaching and practice. Both of her letters reveal the fact that Sor Juana had weighed the situation carefully and considered many of the various arguments against women that were part of her historical moment.

The resistance that Sor Juana faced was complex as women's participation in scholarly activities was being constrained on all fronts by both of the social systems in question. For feudalizing ideologues, women were increasingly viewed in negative terms as tending toward disobedience and in need of control. As Martínez-Góngora's text indicates and as noted above, the Church had largely ceased to encourage religious women to write as an expression of service. The evidence of Sor Juana's personal circumstance seems to point to the fact that certain powerful figures in the Church, especially Núñez de Miranda, were not interested in soliciting written work from religious women. Sor Juana also refers to another previous

experience under the supervision of an Abbess who "creyó que el estudio era cosa de Inquisición y me mandó que no estudiase" (*Woman* 59). Sor Juana was well aware that many regarded the practice of letters as something that should be reserved for men: "Su Majestad sabe por qué y para qué le he pedido que apague la luz de mi entendimiento dejando sólo lo que base para guardar su Ley, pues lo demás sobra, según algunos, en una mujer; y aun hay quien diga que daña" (27). Although Sor Juana invariably referred to all of her writing activities in terms of service to her superiors both in the palace and in the Church hierarchy, she was also well-aware of the fact that even performing writing as service to the Church could be deemed an impertinent activity in a woman.

The practice of writing during Sor Juana's moment was further complicated by the fact that with the advent of bourgeois relations, the figure of the *letrado* mentioned in Chapter Two had appeared—a manifestation of the notion of *subjectivity* that was ideologically opposed to that of *service*. Educated men could work to prove their *merit* and situate themselves as members of the new bureaucracy through the practice of letters. Sor Juana recognized that writing of this sort was a masculine pursuit, and accordingly, her arguments throughout *La Repuesta* concede that women simply cannot participate in the public sphere in the same way that men do ("Carta" 642; *Woman* 69-71). (The logic of this concession in Sor Juana's text will be further explored below.) Similarly, Sor Juana recognized that *merit* was a notion associated with men: "Si estos señora, fueran méritos (como los veo por tales celebrar en los hombres), no lo hubieran sido en mí, porque obro necesariamente" (*Woman* 65). Even in spite of the contradictory fact that she was a published author with work circulating in Spain, Sor Juana never veered from portraying her writing as service. On the contrary and as mentioned earlier in this discussion, she expresses a constant nervousness with respect to the notions of *authorship* and *publication* insisting that she never willingly published anything or even signed her name: "procedí con tal modestia, que no consentí en los primeros poner mi nombre, y en los segundos se puso sin consentimiento ni noticia mía" ("Carta" 640). Not only were authorship and publication antithetical to the feudal notion of writing, but insofar as they were acceptable activities during the period in which Sor Juana lived, they clearly belonged to the

public/masculine sphere. Even as a small girl she had realized that if she were to go to the university in Mexico, it would only be possible if she were disguised as a boy:

> [S]abiendo ya leer y escribir, con todas las otras habilidades de labores y costuras que deprenden las mujeres, oí decir que había Universidad y Escuelas en que se estudiaban las ciencias, en Méjico: y apenas lo oí cuando empecé a matar a mi madre con instantes e importunos ruegos sobre que, mudándome de traje, me enviase a Méjico…. (*Woman* 29)

If writing as service was increasingly disallowed for women during the transition, writing as an expression of individual merit made even less sense for a woman, and especially for a cloistered woman who was supposed to have extremely limited contact with the world outside the convent walls. No doubt Sor Juana's continued noncompliance with the behavior prescribed by her position caused Núñez de Miranda much consternation. And yet, in spite of the fact that Sor Juana was seemingly ideologically excluded from the world of letters, she did continue to write.

Octavio Paz points to the strong relationship that Sor Juana maintained over many years with the viceregal palace as a key factor that provided the nun with the protection she needed to be able to study and write as she did (*Traps* 444). Sor Juana's letter to Núñez de Miranda would seem to corroborate this position as she dedicates a large portion of this text to reminding her confessor of her obligation to serve not only the Church but her Lord and Lady at the palace as well. One by one Sor Juana mentions the works she has submitted at the behest of various superiors whether in the Church or the palace demonstrating to Núñez de Miranda that her only offense has been that of obedience to her superiors. She asks Núñez de Miranda what he might have done had he been in her position:

> Ahora quisiera yo que V. R. con su clarísimo juicio se pusiera en mi lugar y consultara ¿qué respondiera en este lance? ¿Respondería que no podía? Era mentira. ¿Qué no quería? Era inobediencia. ¿Qué no sabía? Ellos no pedían más que hasta donde supiese. […] Era sobredescarado atrevimiento, villano y grosero desagradecimiento a quien me honoraba con el concepto de pensar que sabía hacer una mujer ignorante, lo

que tan lúcidos ingenios solicitaban: luego no pudo hacer otra cosa que obedecer. ("Carta" 640)

Speaking directly about her relationship with the Viceroys she asks:

> ¿Pues qué culpa mía fue el que Sus Excelencias se agradasen de mí? Aunque no había por qué ¿podré yo negarme a tan soberanas personas?, ¿podré sentir el que me honren con sus visitas?
>
> V. R. sabe muy bien que no; como lo experimentó en tiempo de los Excmos. Sres. marqueses de Mancera, pues oí yo a V. R. en muchas ocasiones quejarse de las ocupaciones que le hacía faltar la asistencia de Sus Excelencias sin poderlas no obstante dejar; y si el Excemo. Sr. marqués de Mancera entraba cuantas veces quería en unos conventos tan sagrados como Capuchinas y Teresas; y sin que nadie lo tuviese por malo, ¿cómo podré yo resistir que el Excmo. Sr. marqués de la Laguna entre en éste? (641-2)

Paz's assertion that Sor Juana's scholarly activity was sustained in large part by the support of the palace is also corroborated by the fact that when her ties to the palace weakened, her ability to continue behaving as the exception to the rules was greatly reduced. When the Marquis de la Laguna, already back in Spain, suddenly passed away in April of 1693, Sor Juana's former autonomy was even further placed in jeopardy (*Traps* 445). Two things stand out in the passages quoted above; on the one hand, Sor Juana's confidence regarding the legitimacy of her arguments, and on the other hand, the consistent reproduction of the notion of service, even in a text that openly confronts a superior. Throughout this discussion, the still substantializing ilk of Sor Juana's work has been explored in many ways, and it should come as no surprise that the productive logic of her specific defense of women also exhibits clear substantializing tendencies.

When Sor Juana wrote about the predicament of women her response to the transitional clampdown on women was executed with confidence and force. The criticism that tends to view her defense of herself and of women as visionary, however, is a problematic one for many reasons. As we have seen above, Sor Juana consistently presented her detractors with examples of women from the past and evidence of the fact that her own scholarly activities were conducted as part of her duty to serve. In addition to these arguments, she is

also unswerving in her insistence upon her innate inclination to study as constituting part of her very substance. In all of these ways, Sor Juana's arguments can be observed to be rooted in a still feudalizing ideological matrix. The problem with much of the contemporary criticism on Sor Juana is once again that too much similarity between Sor Juana's moment and our own is assumed. Just as the presence of a *subject* is assumed so is the presence of a *woman* when the reality is that the transition from feudal to capitalist relations of production also involved a radical transformation regarding the understanding of sexual difference. Even as her text continues to produce a substantializing understanding of individual nature, the pressure of the emerging structure is also apparent in her texts in the very fact that she was forced to defend women as a group; in other words, she defended women as a block precisely because they were being grouped more intentionally in this way during transitional upheaval; she defended herself as a woman precisely because she was being categorized by others as a woman and identified with two ideologically constrained definitions of woman that she did not agree with.

If Martínez-Góngora's text is helpful for working out the logic of the transitional clampdown on women by both the feudal and the emerging capitalist system, Thomas Laqueur's book, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud,* is equally helpful for understanding the ways that *sexual difference* would be constructed according to the logic of each of these systems. Laqueur's text charts the history of the appearance of the notion of gender and marks a clear division between the ways that sexual difference was understood in the ancient and feudal worlds versus in the modern world. *Making Sex* examines the new notion of gender, or the new understanding of sexual difference that began to develop from roughly the 17th century forward as one that will eventually be understood as an undeniable and incommunsurable separation between men and women:

> Thus the old model, in which men and women were arrayed according to their degree of metaphysical perfection, their vital heat, along an axis whose telos was male, gave way by the late eighteenth century to a new model of radical dimorphism, of biological divergence (6-7).

Although Laqueur's text is not formulated as an analysis of the ideologies associated with different modes of production, the chronology of discourses he presents makes clear that with

the advent of capitalism there appears a greater polarization between the categories of *men* and *women* along with what can be described as a large-scale equating of all women or an ideological flattening of the category of *woman.* Contrary to the versions of history that mark the advent of bourgeois relations as a step forward with respect to medieval forms of misogyny, the new incommesurability of the sexes represented one ideological manifestation of the a clampdown on women during a period in which the bourgeoisie emphasized "the value of 'manliness'" (Caamaño 8).

Laqueur's work, like that of Martínez-Góngora confirms that during the transition women were increasingly defined, as a group and by their gender, as inferior to men. According to his observations, the transition to the modern era marked a blurring of class lines but a clearer demarcation of the line drawn between men and women (194). Laqueur states that from the 17th century forward there is a "breakdown of the one-sex model" (20) that eventually leads to a new "radical dimorphism"(6) and the establishment of two sexes as well as separate sexual functions (20). Similarly, Martínez-Góngora describes the period as one that saw radical changes in "la noción de la mujer y la construcción de las funciones sociales según el sexo biológico" (5). She goes on to observe that "es esta neta demarcación de las funciones sexuales […] la que va a ser considerada como "natural" durante siglos" (60). Again, Laqueur agrees:

> More generally, by the end of the seventeenth century the various intellectual currents that made up the transformation of human understanding known as the scientific revolution—Baconianism, Cartesian mechanism, empiricist epistemology, Newtonian synthesis—had radically undermined the whole Galenic mode of comprehending the body in relation to the cosmos. (154)
>
> […]
>
> By the nineteenth century, behavior is irrelevant. The question of sex is biological, pure and simple. (136)

At the same time, Laqueur is careful to explain that the transformations taking place in the understanding and construction of sexual difference were not due to scientific progress but rather were part of "an epistemological and socio-political revolution" (20). "Sexual difference

no more followed from anatomy after the scientific revolution than it did in the world of one sex" (163). Laqueur identifies the changes in the understanding of sexual difference as stemming from ideology:

> The history of the representation of the anatomical differences between man and woman is thus extraordinarily independent of the actual structures of these organs or of what was known about them. Ideology, not accuracy of observation, determined how they were seen and which differences would matter. (88)

Laqueur recognizes that there were two divergent Renaissance discourses that construed the body in relation to its cultural meanings.

> The one-flesh discourse I have been explicating seems to regard organs and the qualities of bodies generally as ways of expressing hierarchy, as elements in a network of meaning. On the other hand, the discourse on female uniqueness seems to be postulating an almost modern reductionist theory of corporeal causation, even if it does not carry the notion of incommensurable corporeal opposition as far as would post-Enlightenment writers. (109)

Although his text does not offer a thesis regarding the specific reasons for the existence of the two divergent discourses he describes, the two notions of sexual difference he presents clearly exhibit the productive logics of the social systems in which they were inscribed. The one-flesh discourse that Laqueur describes corresponds to a feudal and substantialist ideology while the radical dimorphism of the two-sex model was produced by a bourgeois mercantilist and eventually biologist ideological matrix. The "emphasis on female uniqueness" that Laqueur points to in the transition was part of the equating and demoting of all women to which certain women writers like Sor Juana so fiercely reacted.

According to Laqueur, before the modern era the relationship between male and female was understood in terms of degree rather than kind. It was "a world where at least two genders correspond[ed] to but one sex, where the boundaries between male and female [were] of degree and not of kind, and where the reproductive organs [were] but one sign among many

of the body's place in a cosmic and cultural order" (25).[51] Laqueur describes what he terms a "one-sex body" but "with different versions attributed to at least two genders" (19-20). Gender was understood as a range of possibilities extending between the poles of masculine and feminine, and society itself was organized as as "a hierarchy of heat and perfection" (27) with men understood as having more vital heat and therefore attaining a higher level of perfection than women. Laqueur explains that from the perspective of Galenic science and the one-sex body, women could be understood as men whose genitalia were expressed inwardly:

> Galen holds that the quality of the respective seeds themselves follows from the hierarchy of the sexes. Man's seed is always thicker and hotter than woman's for the same reason that the penis is extruded and not, like the uterus […], left undeveloped inside the body: humans are the most perfect animal, and man is more perfect than woman because of an 'excess of heat.' (40)
>
> […]
>
> …women are more perfect than other creatures, but the unexpressed organs […] are signs of the absence of heat and consequently of perfection. (27-8)
>
> […]

[51] It is important to mention here that Stephanie Merrim's text on Sor Juana does refer to Laqueur's analysis in order to address the issue of cross-dressing in texts by both Sor Juana and Catalina de Euraso, but even as she recognizes the presence of the "gender and sex ideologies of early modern Spain" (*Early* 12) rehearsing Laqueur's discussion of the one-sex model of sexual difference, it is clear that Laqueur's analysis of the changes taking place around the notion of sexual difference doesn't impact Merrim's reading at a fundamental level. Even though Merrim does state that men and women were understood in terms of "a single biological continuum" and not as "incommensurable opposites" (13), she still describes women of the period who achieved some sort of masculinity as having found a "loophole", a description that indicates that Merrim tends to interpret the activities of these women as rebellious even as she describes them behaving in ways that were inscribed in the ideology of the moment. This is not to say that either Sor Juana or Catalina de Euraso represented the status quo, but Merrim's text reproduces an overly modern notion of subjectivity in its discussion of the actions of these women. In spite of the reference to *Making Sex*, there is in Merrim's discussion relatively little attention paid to the fact that the category of *woman* was undergoing radical upheaval during the period in which she was writing. In the end Merrim utilizes Laqueur's more problematic arguments regarding the conventional nature of sex in the pre-modern world in order to defend the idea that the period in question was one marked by "theatricalized gender" (16). In a certain way Merrim has got it right when she says that the penis was one among many signs that indicated one's place—Sor Juana would likely have agreed that there were many signs that indicated one's nature. For Juan Inés, however, these would have been understood as substantial signs that pointed to the God-given nature of one's very substance. For Sor Juana and her contemporaries gender was not primarily a matter of theater. Like Laqueur, Merrim lacks a theory of ideology to help her make sense of gender as it was produced by a feudalizing ideology.

> Galen argued, 'you could not find a single male part left over that had not simply changed its position.' Instead of being divided by their reproductive anatomies, the sexes are linked by a common one. Women, in other words, are inverted, and hence less perfect, men. (26)

As Laqueur explains, although the female was decidedly less perfect than the male in the one-sex model this understanding of sexual difference also provided for a certain degree of deviation from strictly male and female categorization:

> The modern question, about the 'real' sex of a person, made no sense in this period, not because two sexes were mixed but because there was only one to pick from and it had to be shared by everyone, from the strongest warrior to the most effeminate courtier or to the most aggressive virago to the gentlest maiden. (124)
>
> […]
>
> The one-sex body would seem to have no boundaries that could serve to define social status. There are hirsute, viral women—the virago—who are too hot to procreate and are as bold as men; and there are weak effeminate men, too cold to procreate and perhaps even womanly in wanting to be penetrated. (52)

Laqueur's text makes plain the range of categorizations possible with respect to sexual difference as understood by feudal ideology. His descriptions point to the specific flexibility of substantialism with regard to sex, but at the same time Laqueur also notes that although a degree of mutability was regarded as possible, transformation was also viewed as problematic: "Indeed, in the absence of a purportedly stable system of two sexes, strict sumptuary laws of the body attempted to stabilized gender—woman as woman and man as man—and punishments for transgression were quite severe" (125). Once again, Laqueur is able to describe the situation, but unable to successfully explain the ideological nature of the preoccupation regarding the mutability of substances and individuals.

Laqueur's observation about the ideological nature of the radical shift in thinking about sex and gender that took place during the period of the transition is an important one, but his account of the historical transformations associated with sexual difference lacks a theory of history, which leaves him unable to explain the phenomena he chronicles so well. Laqueur

admits from the start his adversity to proposing causes for the historical changes he traces:

> I am reluctant to frame my story in terms of a specific set of causes for the increasing prominence of the two-sex model. My strategy instead is to suggest, example by example, the ways in which particular struggles and rhetorical situations made men and women talk as if there were now two sexes. (20)

Throughout his text Laqueur is interested "to show, how, in specific contexts, incommensurable, opposite sexes came into being" (193), but his efforts at explaining these changes remain tentative and vague:

> Having argued in Chapter 5 that the two-sex model was not manifest in new knowledge about the body and its functions, I will argue here that it was produced through endless micro-confrontations over power in the public and private spheres. These confrontations occurred in the vast new spaces opened up by the intellectual, economic, and political revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They were fought in terms of sex-determinant characteristics of male and female bodies because the truths of biology had replaced divinely ordained hierarchies or immemorial custom as the basis for the creation and distribution of power in relations between men and women. (193)

Laqueur is only willing to advance the notion of "endless micro-confrontations" when speaking of causes for the changes taking place; his anlaysis lacks a theory of history and of ideology capable of working out the productive logic of two distinct and radically historical notions of sexual difference. When read through the lens of the theoretical framework proposed by the present project, the historical shift from blood and substance to matter and biology (or from the one-sex to the two-sex understanding of sexual difference) begins to take shape as part of the transition from one set of social relations to another. The transition that Laqueur maps acquires new dimensions when coupled with a theory of ideology capable of imagining the distinction between the notion of sexual difference produced by a feudal substantialist ideology and that produced by capitalist, bourgeois and eventually biologist ideology.

Given the wealth of empirical knowledge he has gathered, Laqueur can often point out the errors of other theoretical claims which have been made about the period he studies, but

because he does not systematically subscribe to any specifically delineated theoretical framework, one result is that his critical observations are often contradictory. The following quote from the first chapter of Laqueur's book is an example of the kinds of erroneous conclusions that characterize many of the portions of the text where Laqueur does venture a historical analysis:

> I want to propose instead that in these pre-Enlightenment texts, and even in some later ones, sex, or the body, must be understood as the epi-phenomenon, while gender, what we would take to be a cultural category, was primary or 'real.' Gender -man and woman- mattered a great deal and was part of the order of things; sex was conventional, though modern terminology makes such a reordering nonsensical. At the very least, what we call sex and gender were in the 'one-sex model' explicitly bound up in a circle of meanings from which escape to a supposed biological substrate -the strategy of the Enlightenment- was impossible. In the world of one sex, it was precisely when talk seemed to be most directly about the biology of two sexes that it was most embedded in the politics of gender, in culture. To be a man or a woman was to hold a social rank, a place in society, to assume a cultural role, not to be organically one or the other of two incommensurable sexes. Sex before the seventeenth century, in other words, was still a sociological and not an ontological category. (8)

This quote is very confusing, but it represents Laqueur's clearest attempt to make sense of the transition that took place regarding sex and gender. Laqueur's work explains that in the pre-Enlightenment world, there was a full range of possible sexual differentiations which could potentially apply to a person, with man and woman representing the two poles of this range; a given individual would always condense a unique blend of traits that could be located somewhere within the range from male to female. When Laqueur concludes that for the Middle Ages "sex is conventional", he does so because of the fact that he is unable to explain the lack of a strict division between the two sexes and the logic of sexual (or substantial) mutability that he observes in a number of feudal texts. Given this situation, Laqueur proposes that his readers consider sexual identity in the pre-Enlightenment period to have been understood as a matter of convention, understood by pre-Enlightenment persons as an artificial

designation which served as a societal place marker. He re-iterates this point when he insists that previous to the Enlightenment there was no way to explain anything according to any sort of biological determination. In the last line of the quote above, Laqueur insists that sex was not organic in nature for the pre-Enlightenment individual. He could not be more wrong here. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, in a feudal world characterized by an organic hierarchy, the nature of an individual, sexual or otherwise, was always considered to be substantial or organic. Nothing could be more essential, more substantial, for example, for the feudal individual than his or her blood, his or her substance, and this of course included one's sexual nature. Even in spite of his extensive knowledge of Galenic science, without a good theory of feudal ideology, Laqueur's analysis falls short.

Juan Caamaño's article, "Sign(ature)s of the Invisible: The Ideologies of *Historia de la monja alférez*," investigates the issue of the transformation of gender with respect to the life of Catalina de Erauso, a nun from Spain and contemporary of Sor Juana famed for her desertion of the convent and subsequent transformation into a mercenary soldier. Camaaño's article discusses in detail the problem that transformation presents for substantialist ideology explaining that "transformation is inadmissible, except as the result of a miracle or magical incantation, such as in the transubstantiation of the Host into the body of Christ or the alchemist's conversion of base metals into gold" (6). In other words, "any alteration" of a substantial form can only be interpreted in one of two ways. Transformation is either "perceived as a sign of corruption or, more positively, an indication of divine presence" (9). Laqueur's text notes that in pre-Enlightenment stories of purported transformation of women into men, "violent movement plays a major causal role" as such movement was necessary to generate the heat that would lead to drastic change in the body (126). In such cases, the preferred state of stasis of feudal ideology is interrupted and the radical change of state that occurs must in turn be interpreted as Camaaño suggests as either miraculous or unholy.

In the case of Sor Juana, however, we are not confronting an example of a radical bodily transformation or alteration of dress similar to that of Catalina de Euraso or Joan of Arc, but rather an example of a woman who strives toward achieving a certain degree of manliness with respect to her scholarly activities. While both Laqueur as well as Camaaño agree that

masculinity in a woman was not necessarily interpreted in the pre-modern period as problematic, Camaaño understands woman as a somewhat more fixed category than does Laqueur: "In the context of substantialism, while virile qualities are not undesirable in a woman, woman only imitates or aspires to manliness (i.e. is more God/Christ-like) to the extent that Man, in his fallen nature, is somewhat more removed from sin than his derivative" ("Sign(ature)s" 7). Citing Read he further explains later that "Identity is otherwise stable. Apparent deviations will eventually tend toward their 'natural place.' Therefore, 'Nobles tend to nobility, serfs toward serfdom, and slaves toward servitude,' and, by analogy we might add, women tend toward womanhood" (9-10). Caamaño's observations are very useful for theorizing the situation described by Laqueur, but at the same time it seems that his analysis also reduces the range of possibilities of sexual differentiation described by Laqueur and in this way condenses the substantialist understanding of sex to its most patriarchal iteration.

During the transition the clampdown on women generated by scholastic ideologues reproduced the extreme limits of patriarchy and misogyny particular to the feudal matrix. The notion of woman produced in such texts should not be prematurely assumed to be the norm for feudal relations prior to the period of the transition. It is important not to envision feudal ideology as more rigid than it was, but rather to recognize its specific flexibility, in this case with respect to the issue of women. As with any other ideology, there existed currents of more and less orthodox thinking even within the same ideological matrix. Within the feudal matrix it was possible to construe woman as irremediably wicked by identifying her strictly with the figure of Eve and original sin. Such a configuration represents perhaps the most misogynist extreme within an ideological matrix that was also able to associate womanhood with saintly nuns and the piety of the Virgin Mary. As we have seen above in Sor Juana's own arguments, feudalizing ideology could also envision women as worthy and exemplary servants of Christ. During a historical period in which women were more stringently associated with corruption, Sor Juana argues for a more equitable vision of both men and women as sinners as well as individuals equally endowed with a rational soul and capable of faithful service. With respect to her sexual identity, as we shall explore further below, Sor Juana implies on multiple occasions that her natural place in the gender hierarchy is somewhere between the poles of masculine and

feminine again suggesting that the substantialist notion of sexual difference was able to accommodate the notion of a manly woman within the range of possibilities. While Sor Juana and others like herself might have been considered rare aberrations, they could be effectively explained in substantialist terms. Sor Juana, known as the "rara avis," constructed her arguments in a way that reveals just such an interpretation of her own life.

Although Sor Juana constructs a defense of women in *La Respuesta* and throughout her body of work, at the same time she can also be seen to disassociate herself to a significant degree with femininity distancing herself from strict categorization as a woman. From within the one-sex model of sexual difference that Laqueur describes Sor Juana comprehended her own nature as more masculine than that of other women. In her letter to Núñez de Miranda she described some of the problems that her more masculine nature had caused her:

> Las mujeres sienten que las excedan los hombres, que parezca que los igualo; unos no quisieran que supiera tánto, otros dicen que había de saber más, para tánto aplauso; […]
>
> ¿Qué más podré decir ni ponderar?, que hasta el hacer esta forma de letra algo razonable me costó una prolija y pesada persecución no por más de por que dicen que parecía letra de hombre, y que no era decente, con que me obligaron a malearla adrede y de esto toda esta comunidad es testigo. ("Carta" 641)

In spite of such difficulties, however, the association with masculinity also suggested from a substantialist perspective that Sor Juana was closer to perfection than the average woman. Laqueur refers in his text to curious accounts from the pre-modern period "of women who actually changed sex and suddenly sprouted a penis" (123) explaining that some women claimed to have spontaneously become men on occasions when their bodies produced a heat that forced the genitalia outward. It was also thought that this kind of radical transformation was something that could occur only in women, but not in men as "movement is always up the great chain of being" (125). For a woman to be manly or to become manlier could be interpreted as movement toward greater perfection, while for a man to become more womanly was likely to be understood as degeneration. This helps to explain why Sor Juana considered it a compliment when an admirer by the name of Señor Navarrete sent her a gift of clay vessels

and suggested that she would make a good man (Stavans xxix). In the *romance* that she wrote in response to his compliment, not only does Sor Juana make plain that she is pleased, but she again clearly distances herself from strict categorization as a woman. In the first half of the poem she humbles herself and insists that she is unable to adequately express her admiration for Navarrete:

> Mas si es querer alabaros
> tan reservado imposible,
> que en vuestra pluma, no más,
> puede parecer factible,
> ¿de qué me sirve emprenderlo,
> de qué intentarlo me sirve,
> habiendo plumas que en agua
> sus escarmientos escriben? ("Romance 48" 138)

Further into the poem Sor Juana addresses directly the suggestion that she would better be a man responding that she will give it her best effort:

> Y en el consejo que dais,
> yo os prometo recibirle
> y hacerme fuerza, aunque juzgo
> que no hay fuerzas que entarquinen:
> porque acá Sálmacis falta,
> un cuyos cristales dicen
> que no hay sé qué virtud de
> dar alientos varoniles. (140)

She goes on to explain that even if she cannot become a man, she can hardly be classified as a woman given the fact that she is unmarried. In this sense her body is not dedicated to any specifically female task, and once again she disassociates herself from femininity. At the same time, this portion of the poem also reinforces the notion that both men and women are

endowed with a rational soul and in this way, her arguments constantly work toward reducing the distance (or maintaining a degree of overlap) between male and female:

Yo no entiendo de esas cosas;
sólo sé que aquí me vine
porque, si es que soy mujer
ninguno lo verifique.
Y también sé que, en latín,
sólo a las casadas dicen
úxor, o mujer, y que
es común de dos lo Virgen.
Con que a mí no es bien mirado
que como a mujer me miren,
pues no soy mujer que alguno
de mujer pueda servirle;
Y sólo sé que mi cuerpo,
sin que a uno u otro se incline,
es neutro, o abstracto, cuanto
sólo el Alma deposite. (140)

The above poem touches on the importance of the mixture of substances in its reference to the crystal waters of the Sálmacis fountain that aid in cultivating masculinity. Elsewhere in her writing the emphasis on substance is even more patent. As we saw in earlier chapters, Sor Juana's entire self-defense is predicated on the notion that her dedication to her studies, "el desear saber" (*Woman* 43), was the result of "El natural impulso que Dios puso en mí" (27). The word "inclinación" that refers to Sor Juana's substantial make-up appears over and again in *La Respuesta* (*Woman* 27, 33, 43, 45) as she explains more than once that it was impossible to prohibit her from studying as studying was part of her nature. When they took her books away she simply studied with her eyes; "esto es tan continuo que no necesito de libros" (63). Although Sor Juana never makes an attempt to gauge her substance directly in terms of the four humors, the emphasis on substance is clear as well as the effort to place

herself somewhat closer to the masculine pole. Laquer's text explains that many possible combinations of the four humors (of substances) existed in the one-sex model of sexual difference:

> Doctors as well as laypeople in the Renaissance believed that the humorial balances of the sexes differed along the axis of hot and cold, wet and dry, that such differences had implications for anatomy as well as for behavior, and that humorial imbalance caused disease. They spoke as if there were warm or cold qualities somewhere in the body whose presence was made know by observable features; skin color, hair, temperament. On the other hand, no one believed that a quantifiable amount of some humor caused someone to be male or female. There were thought to be hot, hirsute viragos and effeminate, cold and hairless men, colder than exceptionally hot women. The claim was rather that men as a species were hotter and drier than women as a species. (112)

When Sor Juana does engage directly the notion of the four humors in *La Repuesta* she again constructs her arguments in a way that reduces the distance between men and women in the sense that she defends the idea that many different kinds of people exist, including women who should study as well as many men who should not. She attributes much heretical scholarship to the fact that many men have presumed themselves to be wise solely on the basis of their masculinity:

> Y esto es tan justo que no sólo a las mujeres, que por tan ineptas están tenidas, sino a los hombres, que con sólo serlo piensan que son sabios, se había de prohibir la interpretación de las Sagradas Letras, en no siendo muy doctos y virtuosos y de ingenios dóciles y bien inclinados; porque de lo contrario creo yo que han salido tantos sectarios y que ha sido la raíz de tantas herejías. (*Woman* 69-71)

Sor Juana mentions *Pelagio*, *Arrio* and *Lutero* as examples of men whose dedication to letters was in disagreement with their natural inclination. The fact that they produced heretical texts was evidence of the discord. As she continues her argument, the substantializing logic becomes increasingly apparent. In those who are not naturally inclined to study, the attempt to do so results in sickness, corruption of both the body and of knowledge itself as they do not mix well:

> A éstos vuelvo a decir, hace daño el estudiar, porque es poner espada en manos de un furioso; […] Tales fueron las Divinas Letras en poder del malvado Pelagio y el protervo Arrio, del malvado Lutero […] a los cuales hizo daño la sabiduría porque, aunque es el mejor alimento y vida del alma, a la manera que en el estómago mal acomplexionado y de viciado calor, mientras mejores los alimentos que recibe, más áridos, fermentados y perversos son los humores que cría, así estos malévolos, mientras más estudian, perores opiniones engendran; […] estudian mucho y digieren poco, sin proporcionarse al vaso limitado de sus entendimientos. (71)

Only certain people are capable of digesting the scriptures; in other words, aptitude for study is part of one's physical constitution. Ultimately, however, Sor Juana's arguments defending study for those aptly inclined, including women, were countered by numerous arguments that defined women as ill-suited for such pursuits.

Sor Juana, like Catalina de Erauso, the crossdressing nun mentioned above, was also engaged in activity that at least some members of the Church found problematic because it could not be reconciled with the logic of a scholastic notion of study and writing but also because it overlapped with the realm of masculine activity. The major problem from the perspective of the Church was Sor Juana's poetic production; to write lyric poetry implied taking part in authorship, publication and display of personal merit. Such activities were contradictory to the feudal matrix which explains Sor Juana's expressed nervousness about publication as well as her insistence upon defending her poetic practice in terms of service. At the same time, these activities were also being codified as pertaining exclusively to men. From the perspective of bourgeois ideology the display of merit expressed "the value of "manliness" for the emerging bourgeoisie" (Camaaño, "Sign(ature)s" 8) and Sor Juana herself recognized, as mentioned above, the fact that composing verse was an activity that garnered merit when practiced by men—"(como los veo por tales celebrar en los hombres)" (*Woman* 65)—Camaaño's article on Catalina de Erauso argues that Catalina's transformation into a man was essentially a function of her "drive to acquire merit, which is in turn an effect of the split between public and private spheres" ("Sign(ature)s" 7); Although Sor Juana herself did not inhabit the public sphere in the same bold way as Catalina, as Camaaño explains, "the

public/private dichotomy provides a domain for the cultivation of private talent, and so its public recognition" (8). To the degree that she cultivated her merit and participated in the circulation of her writing she can also be observed to have participated in what could only have been regarded as manly behavior.

Just like in the case of Catalina de Erauso, the Church rejected this association with maleness and rebuked each of these women as women holding that "too much public exposure and circulation" could "put her honor at risk;" in the case of both women the Church encouraged each "to return to her "rightful" place in the convent" (Camaaño, "Sign(ature)s" 22). In this sense it could be argued that the scholastic hierarchy was attempting to curb Sor Juana's masculinity. She was a woman and as a woman she should respect her station in the private sphere (convents were now understood according to the new split[52]) and her obligation to remain silent. Men were allowed to express their merit, but women were limited to the expression of virtue. The radical dimorphism that characterized the understanding of sexual difference for early bourgeois relations largely eliminated the range of sexual identities possible in the feudal matrix before the period of clampdown. Sor Juana was caught between a resurgent feudal ideology that increasingly viewed women as depraved and in need of tighter control and an emerging bourgeois ideology that would understand women almost exclusively in terms of the domestic functions of wife and mother. Both of these definitions of woman were unacceptable to Sor Juana as neither afforded her the opportunity to follow her natural inclination.

[52] Much has been written about Sor Juana's decision to become a nun and enter a convent, and many have viewed this decision as the least unattractive option at this particular historical conjuncture for a woman who wished to dedicate herself to study. While this may in fact be the case, it is also important to recognize that Sor Juana's aversion to and rejection of marriage was more acceptable in her moment and from the standpoint of a feudalizing ideology that understood celibacy as a form of service (and virginity as a guarantee of pure lineage) than it would be for bourgeois ideology. Even her love of letters could be better accommodated within feudal ideology prior to the period of the transition than in the emerging bourgeois notion of woman that in its first iteration largely disassociated women from letters.

4.5 Honoring the public/private spilt

Also important for understanding the ideological contradictions that determined Sor Juana's situation is a closer examination of the way that the feudal notion of honor played a part in relegating women to the private sphere. The following quote from *La Respuesta* appears earlier in this chapter, but it is worth examining again as it demonstrates clearly the fact that Sor Juana defended *private* study for women:

> ...pero los privados y particulares estudios ¿quién los ha prohibido a las mujeres? ¿No tienen alma racional como los hombres? ¿Pues por qué no gozará el privilegio de la ilustración de las letras con ellas? ¿No es capaz de tanta gracia y gloria de Dios como la suya? ¿Pues por qué no será capaz de tántas noticias y ciencias que es menos? ¿Qué revelación divina, qué determinación de la Iglesia, qué dictamen de la razón hizo para nosotras tan severa ley? ("Carta" 642)

In spite of the fact that Sor Juana viewed men and women as sharing the same capacity for reason, she also understood that they cannot inhabit the same spaces, as this was dangerous for women's honor. Sor Juana stresses that her studies have been conducted almost exclusively in private and have harmed no one, including herself. Throughout the passage, however, Sor Juana never concedes that women are less able to do any of the tasks that men do in public, only that they should not because of the risk to their honor:

> Mis estudios no han sido en daño ni perjuicio de nadie, mayormente habiendo sido tan sumamente privados que no me he valido ni aun de la dirección de un maestro, sino que a secas me lo he habido conmigo y mi trabajo, que no ignoro que el cursar públicamente las escuelas no fuera decente a la honestidad de una mujer, por la ocasionada familiaridad con los hombres y que ésta sería razón de publicar los estudios públicos; y el no disputarles lugar señalado para ellos, será porque como no las ha menester la república para el gobierno de los magistrados (de que por la misma razón de honestidad están excluidas) no cuida de lo que no les ha de servir. ("Carta" 642)

A decade after she wrote to Núñez de Miranda, Sor Juana's *Respuesta* once again condenses the same arguments found in the earlier letter on the issue of public and private participation in letters. The more Sor Juana accepts the idea that the public space is for men

and that women should not breech the confines of the private sphere, the more she highlights the contradictory nature of her situation and her writing.

> El venerable Doctor Arce (digno profesor de Escritura por su virtud y letras), en su *Studioso Bibliorum* excita esta cuestión: *An liceat foeminis sacrorum Bibliorun studio incumbere? eaque interpretari?* Y trae por la parte contraria muchas sentencias de santos, en especial aquello del Apóstol: *Mulieres in Ecclesis taceant, non enim permittitur eis loqui*, etc. Trae después otras sentencias, y del mismo Apóstol aquel lugar *ad Titum*: *Anus similiter in habitu sancto, bene docentes*, con interpretaciones de los Santos Padres; al fin resuelve, con su prudencia, que el leer públicamente en las cátedras y predicar en los púlpitos no es lícito a las mujeres; pero que el estudiar, escribir y enseñar privadamente no sólo les es lícito, pero muy provechoso y útil; claro está que esto no se debe entender con todas, sin con aquellas quienes hubiere Dios dotado de especial virtud y prudencia y que fueran muy provectas y eruditas y tuvieren el talento y requisitos necesarios para tan sagrado empleo. Y esto es tan justo que no sólo a las mujeres, que por tan ineptas están tenidas, sino a los hombres, que con sólo serlo piensan que son sabios, se había de prohibir la interpretación de las Sagradas Letras, en no siendo muy doctos y virtuosos y de ingenios dóciles y bien inclinados; (*Woman* 69-71)

This passage from *La Respuesta* condenses Sor Juana's petition and reveals the intersection between the feudal notion of honor and the new organization of society according to the logic of public and private spheres. Honor is still a bodily reality and therefore women shouldn't risk exposure to the public sphere, but private study is beneficial. At the same time, only men and women with a clear and virtuous inclination to study should engage in such activity. Once again Sor Juana works to salvage at least private study for women while refuting the ideological wedge being driven between the notions of man and woman by continuing to claim the equality of their intellectual capacities.

Unfortunately for Sor Juana, her defense was little heeded as she was pleading her case at a moment when the Church was increasingly disallowing the study of the scriptures for women. Not only was the public sphere an unacceptable space for women according to both

feudal and bourgeois ideology, but the Church was also severely restricting women's study even in private as discussed earlier in the Chapter and as evidenced in Sor Juana's own protests. As she reminds her superiors of the recommendations of Doctor Arce who prescribed study of the scripture as part of a daily "sagrado ejercicio" for young women and as an activity to be directed by older women within the household (75) the new emphasis on domesticity begins to emerge. Sor Juana then returns to the question of education for women religious: "Pues si así quería el Santo que se educase una niña que apenas empezaba a hablar, ¿qué querrá en sus monjas y en sus hijas espirituales?" (75). The central contradiction present in the letter from Sor Filotea resides in the fact that the Bishop asks Sor Juana to stop writing poetry and dedicate herself more fully to the scriptures in the midst of a clampdown on women that was by and large denying them this privilege. If the humanist current in the *querelle de femmes* maintained a space for women's education, it was, as Martínez-Góngora explains, directed at equipping women with domestic skills and values to be utilized in the private sphere:

> Si bien las mujeres debían acceder a las lecturas que componían el saber humanista nunca se planteó como pertinente una formación política. Por el contrario, para los humanistas en general y para Erasmo en concreto, la educación de las mujeres estaba orientada al mejor desempeño de su papeles tradicionales de madre y esposa, lo que se correspondía con los intereses del nuevo tipo de ciudadano (Sowards, "Erasmus" 78). (94)

While the humanist vision for women's education that Martínez-Góngora describes above does not correspond precisely to the debate that Sor Juana engaged in regarding ecclesiastical women with her superiors, it is clear that in both the feudalizing as well as the bourgeois ideological matrixes education for women was being constructed as a function of the private sphere.

Sor Juana's defense of women was one that worked against the new idea that men and women were incommensurable entities. Each time she engaged this issue she attempted to reduce the distance between male and female, blurring the lines between the genders and their associated roles and equating men and women in the ways that it was possible to do so from within her ideological perspective. If to a certain degree feudalizing ideology provided

some sort of buttress against an emerging bourgeois notion of woman that viewed women as inferior creatures meant for domesticity, it can also be argued that the specific intersection between feudalizing and bourgeois ideological notions that marks Sor Juana's texts also helped to seal her fate and cut her off from the possibility of full-fledged identification with the notion of authorship. On the one hand, Sor Juana reproduces throughout her writing the feudal notion of *service* as well as that of *honor.* For Sor Juana a woman's honor was an issue of real concern and of course had to be safe-guarded. It was precisely the intersection between the feudalizing notion of honor and the new structure of public/private split that determined Sor Juana's conclusions about women's proper place and ultimately bolstered her detractors' case against her even from within Sor Juana'a own ideological production. As witnessed in her theatrical production, *Los empeños de una casa*, within the context of Sor Juana's writing the notion of honor becomes inextricably entangled with that of the public/private split. In her plays as well as in her letters Sor Juana recognizes time and again that honor is in danger when women are too exposed to the public sphere; given her acceptance of the private as the space associated with women, she ends up unable to justify any personal display of merit, as merit is a function of the public sphere and thus available only to men. Even as she attempted to defend women in the face of the personal clampdown she experienced from her superiors in the church hierarchy, her arguments adopted the logic of the public/private split and essentially accepted a new formula for subordination, the relegation of women to the private sphere.

4.6 Conclusion: was Sor Juana a feminist?

That Sor Juana's writing boldly defends women and on multiple occasions asserts women's equality with men is a fact that justifiably inspires interest, curiosity, and respect for the 17th century nun. Her place in history as a defender of women is secure, but as I have argued in this dissertation the nature of this defense is often blurred by her too easy classification as feminist. The problem occurs in large part because of the failure to carefully define the term *feminist* coupled with the tendency to simply view feminism as a transhistorical phenomenon. Criticism that effortlessly inserts Sor Juana into a genealogy of feminist

discourse without taking into account the radical historicity of feminism itself, in many ways represents a great obstacle to the development of an understanding of the logic of her writing. In the same way that a monolithic understanding of *patriarchy* makes it impossible to work out the historical nature of women's subordination to men, a monolithic view of *feminism* that indiscriminately applies the term "feminist" to medieval, transitional, and modern texts alike hinders our understanding of the radical historicity of women's struggles against historical forms of subordination.

The last chapter of this discussion has been dedicated to examining the difference between the distinct notions of *woman* produced before, during and after the transition to capitalism; in the same way that the notion of woman requires historization, it is possible to argue for the need to define at least two separate notions of *feminism* in order to talk about the logic of the defense of women that corresponded to the feudal mode of production and the logic of feminism under capitalism. Historically speaking, the term "feminism" is one that appears under the auspices of the capitalist system, and as a result it is inevitably infused from the start with the logic of subjectivity. In this sense it is always risky to apply this specific term to any defense of women that appears before the advent of the subject. The failure to historicize feminism is not at all unlike the failure to historicize subjectivity; in both scenarios bourgeois categories are projected upon the past and deemed present in historical settings where this would have been ideologically impossible.

If we accept the idea that feminism is a development particular to the capitalist moment, then we can begin to examine its particular demand for equality between men and women in its radically historical dimension. The feminist struggle for equality has developed within the bourgeois ideological matrix and is therefore aimed at a very specific and radically historical kind of equality deriving from the logic of the system in question; at its core, feminism demands the only real equality that can be conceived of within a capitalist society—equality before the market. For what is feminism if it is not the demand for equal access to the public sphere, i.e., equal access to education, the job market, and a paycheck equal to that of male counterparts, with the necessary conditions for such a reality being access to the regulation of reproduction and the sharing of child rearing responsibilities? In effect, feminism demands that

women, like men, be free, with “freedom” being defined (as opposed to the serfdom of the former system) as the freedom to sell one’s labor power on the market. If the term “feminism” is best understood as referring to a historically specific form of resistance overdetermined by the logic of capitalism and its key notion of subjectivity, then Sor Juana’s defense of women is surely not adequately captured by this definition.

As we saw above, even though the public sphere had already been constituted and Sor Juana herself desired to access the domain of letters (in spite of her own insistence that she never intended to publish anything), ultimately she was unable to conceive of a reality in which women shared equally with men in the public sphere. Sor Juana’s still feudalizing understanding of the world made it impossible to reconcile the notion of honor with that of public presence for women. This ideological contradiction in her texts makes it clear that the equality between men and women that could be imagined from the perspective of a feudalizing ideological matrix looked very different from the equality that can be imagined under capitalistic relations. It is important to recognize that an ideological rupture was necessary, the production of subjectivity, in order for a new vision of equality to appear. The subject of bourgeois relations had already appeared on the horizon by the time Sor Juana began her life and in many ways her work does produce an emerging subjectivity, but at the same time, her struggle for equality is primarily defined according to the logic of feudal ideology. In other words, the rights that women enjoy today cannot accurately be understood as the direct ancestor of the kind of equality that Sor Juana defended. Sor Juana’s response to the Bishop did not envision a new and modern society where women would enjoy equality with men as fellow occupants of the public sphere.

The equality that Sor Juana could conceive of was, like so many other aspects of her writing, contradictory in nature. To a certain degree, Sor Juana's multiple interventions on behalf of women fused both a defense of equality based in feudalizing ideology (where one's blood or substance was equal to one's level of privilege) with the notion of the equality of rational souls derived, at least in part, from the first bourgeois ideological matrix. Her explication of the rational soul, however, draws more upon the Augustinian concept (as noted earlier) than it does upon the bourgeois understanding of the beautiful soul. Substance and

service are still thick in Sor Juana's texts. Furthermore, it should also be emphasized that Sor Juana does not flatten out the social hierarchy by claiming that all are equal; rather, the equality that she defended apologetically was an equality that operated according to the logic of a sacralized and still feudal social hierarchy. As observed above, men were regarded as occupying a higher place in the hierarchy than women, but men and women could also simultaneously be understood as sharing the same substance, as but one sex/flesh. Stratification of society was determined primarily according to blood (Sor Juana tends to emphasize God-given substance/nature), not gender. Sor Juana understood herself, on the one hand, as equal to those of similar pedigree (and higher in the hierarchy than many), but also as equal to her fellow men and women in general in the way that equality could most readily be conceived of within the feudal matrix—as equality before God, or equality as sinners. Sor Juana seems to have accepted the idea that men tended more toward scholarly pursuits and that perhaps in this way she was manlier than other women. The idea that women were baser creatures outdistancing men in their capacity and propensity for sin, however, was unacceptable for Sor Juana, and this is the logic at the center of her defense of women. Consequently, hers is a defense of both the equality of rational capacity in men and women and the equality of men and women as servants of God and as fellow sinners before their common judge.

As noted in many other passages cited above, in *La Respuesta* Sor Juana presents multiple examples of learned women as part of her defense. She also cites examples of men who praise women for their erudition. Directing herself to the Bishop, Sor Juana cites San Jerónimo's praise of learned women. According to Sor Juana, San Jerónimo held that "no sólo es lícito, pero utilísimo y necesario a las mujeres el estudio de las sagradas letras, y mucho más a las monjas" (*Woman* 87). In this way, Sor Juana further refines her arguments about who should be dedicated to study, in this case explaining that all women should know something of the scriptures, and religious women even more. Although men are not mentioned here, the implication is that women, like men, are capable and should be versed in scripture. Again, it is difficult to reconcile this sort of defense of women with the precise logic of modern feminism as discussed above. Sor Juana is arguing for equal status as servants of God, not for equal status

in terms of citizenship. Throughout her letter, Sor Juana's defense of equality confronts the increased subordination of women with apologetic arguments regarding the misinterpretation of scriptural references to women and their role in the Church. In the following passage Sor Juana quotes in Latin the Apostle Paul saying that God is responsible for the "measure of faith" granted to each. By abstraction, she implies that the inclination for study is also granted by God, and as she goes on to explain, such aptitude does not belong exclusively to men or women:

> A esto dice el Apóstol: *Dico enim per gratiam quae data est mihi, omnibus qui sunt inter vos: Non plus sapere quam oportet sapere, sed sapere ad sobrietatem: et unicuique sicut Deus divisit mensuram fidei*. Y en verdad no lo dijo el Apóstol a las mujeres, sino a los hombres; y que no es solo para ellas el *taceant*, sino para todos los que no fueren muy aptos. Querer yo saber tanto o más que Aristóteles o que San Agustín, si no tengo aptitud de San Agustín o Aristóteles, aunque estudie más que los dos, no sólo no lo conseguiré, sino que debilitaré e entorpeceré la operación de mi flaco entendimiento con la desproporción del objeto. (73)

Some women and some men are naturally inclined to study just as some men and some women are not capable of such activity. Either way her argumentative strategy consistently equates men and women as servants who are not meant to alter their natural aptitudes as granted by God; such aptitudes are substantial. The above passage makes reference to "el *taceant*" or the call for women to remain silent. Later in the letter, Sor Juana takes up this topic once more in order to offer a revised interpretation of the sacred text. Sor Juana's argument does not challenge the content of the scriptures themselves, but rather the interpretation that suggests that Paul was calling exclusively for women to remain silent. Once again, she addresses a passage from scripture referring to women in order to make the claim that it refers to both men and women in general. According to Sor Juana, when Paul asked for silence, he asked for silence from all who were unequipped to speak of sacred matters:

> *Mulier in silencio discat*; siendo este lugar más en favor que en contra de las mujeres, pues manda que aprendan, y mientras aprenden, claro está que es necesario que callen. Y también está escrito: *Audi Isreal, est tace*; donde se habla con toda la colección de los

> hombres y mujeres, y a todos se manda callar, porque quien oye y aprende es mucha razón que atienda y calle. (81)

As Sor Juana points out, it is also necessary to be silent in order to learn, and everyone should heed this lesson.

What is quite possibly Sor Juana's most well-known poem, *Redondilla* # 92, commonly referred to as "Hombres necios," presents another good example of the way that her arguments in favor of women consistently draw upon the Christian creed in order to emphasize the equality of women and men. This poem argues against the ways that men blame women for licentiousness, but in the context of contemporary critical analysis, the feudalizing and religious logic of the poem is largely ignored. Instead, it is most often upheld as a bold feminist counter-attack on men. Ilan Stavans describes the poem in the following manner:

> Her overall ideological stance is nowhere clearer than in her philosophical satire 'Misguided men, who will chastise a woman when no blame is due,' her most famous *redondilla*, an indictment that goes beyond class lines, criticizing men for manipulating women, and reprimanding women for their passivity and submission to men. (xxii)

While it is true that much can be learned about the ideological extraction of Sor Juana's work by reading this particular poem, neither Stavans nor Stephanie Merrim mentions its very apparent religiosity. Merrim summarizes the content of the *redondilla* in the following manner emphasizing its feminist message:

> 'Hombres necios,' availing itself of the prevalent satirical mode as did other female-authored works, establishes the only outspoken link between Sor Juana's love poetry and the outspoken feminism of her autobiographical documents and the *villancicos* to Saint Catherine of Alexandria. Bénassy-Berling neatly describes the feminist message of the *redondilla*'s ending in saying: 'Discreetly but firmly, the nun performs a small Copernican revolution in the last line as she assigns men… the role of object, object of desire, object of scandal' (277). In a direct counteroffensive to *querelle* misogyny, 'Hombres necios' turns the table on men and their 'sin razón' or lack of reason by attributing to them the negative qualities that misogyny imputes to women. (66)

Merrim is right to understand Sor Juana's poem as part of a "counteroffensive to *querelle* misogyny," but she is mistaken when she points somewhat vaguely to misogyny as the origin of the arguments regarding "the negative qualities" ascribed to women. Although it is true that misogyny increased in this period and women were often cast as utterly inferior to men, what Merrim fails to recognize is that feudalizing ideology understands both men and women as characterized with negative qualities, i.e., as burdened with a sinful nature. Sor Juana is not simply turning the table and shifting negative qualities to men, but arguing that men and women share equally in the same licentious nature. Once again, the kind of equality that she is arguing for must be historically grounded. Just as in *La Respuesta*, she is here again defending in her poem the equality men and women as sinners before God, as mortal creatures whose life is a walk through a valley of sin, tears and death. Read according to this lens, the fact that the poem is populated with references to temptation, culpability and sin becomes harder to ignore. The message of her poem is that both men and women are culpable, but that men tend to unfairly cast all of the blame for licentious amorous activity on women. The oft-cited opening lines of the poem begin by assigning fault to men:

> Hombres necios que acusáis
> a la mujer sin razón,
> sin ver que sois la ocasión
> de lo mismo que culpáis:
> […]
> ¿por qué queréis que obren bien
> si las incitáis al mal?
> […]
> Dan vuestras amantes penas
> a sus libertades alas,
> y después de hacerlas malas
> las queréis hallar muy buenas. ("Redondilla 92" 109)

Men are identified as active and aggressive in their lustful pursuit of women, and for this reason, they are often at fault for the corruption of women. The final sections of the poem,

however, shift back to a slightly different argument in which Sor Juana makes it very clear that both men and women share the blame equally:

> ¿Cuál mayor culpa ha tenido
> en una pasión errada:
> la que cae de rogada,
> o el que ruega de caído?
>
> ¿O cuál es más de culpar,
> aunque cualquier mal haga:
> la que peca por la paga,
> o el que paga por pecar? (109)

Although Sor Juana writes her poem directly interpolating foolish men, these two stanzas cited just above complicate the issue of fault in a way that assigns blame to both parties. This portion of the poem reproduces the feudal idea that *all* are sinners. Even in the case of prostitution presented in the second stanza where the woman is purportedly in the role of enticer/temptress (as opposed to the aggressive male portrayed earlier in the poem), according to Sor Juana, it is simply unjust to claim that women are more at fault than men. Near the end of the poem, Sor Juana asks men why they are surprised to hear that they share in the blame:

> Pues ¿para qué os espantáis
> de la culpa que tenéis? (109)

Sor Juana's confidence in writing this poem can be attributed at least in part to the fact that her arguments are, after all, scriptural. Why should men be surprised to be reminded of their sinful nature? Sor Juana's rebuke of men (and women too, strictly speaking) is in summary a reminder of the corrupt nature of the flesh in a fallen world. She reminds her reader of the condition of man in general, and advises men in particular to stop—"dejad de solicitar"—their unrelenting solicitation of women (109). Sor Juana ends her poem claiming that her arguments are well-founded and justified with much evidence. In the last line she references man's fallen nature once more by implicitly naming the three corrupting enemies of men: the devil, the flesh and the world:

Bien con muchas armas fundo
que lidia vuestra arrogancia,
pues en promesa e instancia
juntáis diablo, carne y mundo. (109)

Her poem is written to men, but its overall gesture is once more an example of Sor Juana's ongoing effort to equate men and women.

Sor Juana's defense of women is most certainly a defense of women, but perhaps is is not best classified as feminist. The customary application of the term "feminism" with respect to Sor Juana's work is symptomatic of the tendency of bourgeois criticism to comprehend pre-bourgeois history according to the logic of its own categories. Sor Juana's struggle against subordination, however, is impossible to fully comprehend according to the logic of subjectivity. Understanding her struggle against subordination necessitates a theoretical framework that takes into account the fact that her fight was to a large degree against a still feudalizing historical form of subordination whose logic was radically other than that faced by women today. Even so, her struggle remains relevant today. For in the end, we are much better equipped in our own fight against male dominance and exploitation in general if we can develop a stronger history of the multiple forms that women's oppression has taken as well as the ways that women have articulated their resistance.

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