



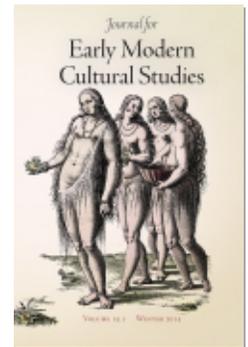
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Cosmetic Ontologies, Cosmetic Subversions:

Articulating Black Beauty and Humanity in Luis de Góngora's "En la fiesta del Santísimo Sacramento"

NICK JONES

ABSTRACT

This essay examines Luis de Góngora y Argote's poetic representation of black female beauty and humanness in the letrilla "En la fiesta del Santísimo Sacramento" (1609). Góngora underscores the power of black beauty through cosmetics, fine clothing, and the allegorical exegesis of the Song of Songs's well-known message: "I am black but beautiful." The poet's staging of cosmetics' ideological and rhetorical formulations illustrates how black women construct their own racial identity. The African slave characters do this through the subversive assertion of their natural beauty and humanity, and specifically by reclaiming cosmetic practices and stylizations of the body typically available to European women.



In the spring of 1609, the city of Córdoba began preparations for its Corpus Christi festivities to commemorate the institution of the Holy Eucharist. In parish celebrations, street decorations were installed and lavish altars were erected in cathedrals and churches. The Corpus Christi monstrance—a 2 meter-high, 200 kilo creation in gold and silver crafted by German goldsmith Henry of Arfe nearly a century before—was polished once again in preparation for the procession. To contribute to the grandeur of the Corpus Christi celebrations that year, Córdoba Bishop Diego de Mardones, known for his devotion to the *Santísimo Sacramento* ("Blessed Sacrament"), commissioned Luis de Góngora y Argote to compose a number of *letrillas*. The *letrilla* is a short poetic composition that addresses themes of love, holy feasts, and satire. Primarily leisurely and satiric in tone, the *letrilla* is defined by Tomás Navarro

Tomás as having an octosyllabic or hexasyllabic metric composition (530). At the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries, the *letrilla* was also called a *villancico*. The *villancico* can be characterized in the following three ways: (1) by its musical character; (2) by its popular origin and appropriation in part by learned poets; and (3) by its restriction to religious settings.¹

The place of choice for performing these poems was the Cathedral of Córdoba, a dwarf religious structure within a massive mosque. A space illustrative of hyperbolic hybridity, the cathedral incorporated, on the one hand, the architectural design and remnants of the mosque that once belonged to the Umayyad Moorish dynasty and, on the other hand, extremely elaborate displays of Roman Catholic artwork and religious iconography. It is also important to highlight that the *letrilla's* 1609 date of composition coincides with King Philip III of Spain's 1609 Edict of Expulsion, when the first and largest of the *morisco* expulsions from the Grau of Valencia took place.² For the Corpus Christi celebrations, numerous candles would have been lit on ornate golden-gilt Baroque *candelarias* ("candle holders"), sconces, and hanging chandeliers, whose flickering lights pierced the dense fog of aromatic frankincense and myrrh incense burning from thuribles. Corpus Christi processions would assemble at the main entrance of the cathedral to commence their travels throughout the city of Córdoba. Carnavalesque dances, mime, and music also accompanied these solemn processions commemorating the real presence of the Body of Christ. These performances were executed by acting troupes financed and hired by the Church and undoubtedly supported by Bishop Fray Diego de Mardones. Many of these dances portrayed black Africans, gypsies, *moriscos*, and Portuguese subjects.³

On the eve of Corpus Christi in 1609, the ecclesiastical and political elite, as well as others belonging to all rungs of society—a multicultural and multiracial audience who participated in these religious feast day ceremonies—congregated at the Cathedral of Córdoba to hear the performance of Góngora's "En la fiesta del Santísimo Sacramento."

Juana: *Mañana sa Corpus Christa.*

mana Crara:

alcoholemo la cara

e lavémono la vista.

Clara: *¡Ay, Jesús, cómo sa mu trista!*

Juana: *¿Qué tene? ¿Pringa señora?*

- Clara: *Samo negra pecandora,
e branca la Sacramenta.*
- Juana: *La alma sa como la denta,
Crara mana.
Pongamo fustana,
e bailemo alegre;
que aunque samo negra,
sa hermosa tú.
Zambambú, morenica de Congo,
zambambú.
Zambambú, qué galana me pongo,
zambambú.*
- Juana: *Vamo a la sagraria, prima,
veramo la procesiona,
que aunque negra, sa persona
que la perrera me estima.
A esse mármolo te arrima.*
- Clara: *Mas tinta sudamo, Juana,
que dos pruma de crivana.
¿Quién sa aquél?*
- Juana: *La perdiguera.*
- Clara: *¿Y esotra chupamadera?*
- Juana: *La señora chirimista.*
- Clara: *¡Ay Jesús, como sa mu trista! etc.*
- Juana: *Mira la cabilda, cuánta
va en rengre noble señora,
cuya virtú me namora,
cuya majestá me panta.*
- Clara: *¿Si viene la Obispa santa?
¡Chillémola!*
- Juana: *¡Ay, qué cravela!
Pégate, Crara, cüela;
la mano le besará,
que mano que tanto da
en Congo aun sará bien quista.*
- Clara: *¡Ay, Jesús, como sa mu trista! etc.* (lines 1–40)

- Juana: Tomorrow is Corpus Christi, my sister Clara. Let's make-up
[blacken] our faces with kohl liner and wash our eyes [white].
- Clara: Oh Lord, I'm so sad!
- Juana: What's the matter? Did mistress lard you?
- Clara: We're black sinners and the Sacrament is white.
- Juana: The soul is like the teeth, my sister Clara. Let's put on our skirts
and boogie down, for even though we are black you are beautiful.
Zambambú, lil' black chick from the Congo, Zambambú.
Zambambú, Oh how nice I'm dolled up, Zambambú.
- Juana: Let's go to the tabernacle, sister. There we'll see the procession.
Even though I'm black, I am a person, and the keeper of hounds
admires me. And lean over on that marble.
- Clara: But we sweat more black ink, Juana, than a scribe's two quills.
Who's that over there?
- Juana: The verger.
- Clara: And that other woodsucker?
- Juana: That's the flageolet player.
- Clara: Oh Lord, I'm so sad!
- Juana: Look! So many people congregate around the Virgin Mary, of
whose virtue I'm enamored, and whose grandeur bewilders me.
- Clara: If the Bishop comes, what shall we do? Let's cry out to him!
- Juana: Oh what a beautiful carnation! Get nearer, Clara, scoot in! You
should kiss his [the Bishop's] hand; a hand that favors us blacks so
much that even in the Congo he will be well loved.
- Clara: Oh Lord, I'm so sad!⁴

What remains striking for most readers is the language in which Góngora composes the poem: *habla de negros*, or what I translate as “Black Talk.” Between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries in Spain and Portugal—a span of time when the creation and performance of Africanized Castilian was in vogue—*habla de negros* circulated as a catchphrase used not only to identify and mark, but also to deride how black Africans, mainly slaves, spoke Spanish. Between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries, most blacks living in the Iberian Peninsula were slaves. They contributed to early modern Hispanic imperial expansion by serving as cartographers on long-distance transatlantic voyages, building urban infrastructure, and producing crops and material goods. Góngora’s “En la fiesta del Santísimo Sacramento” showcases *habla de*

negros in order to assign “African” sounds as linguistic markers of cultural and linguistic difference. Scholarly readings of *habla de negros* provided by Hispanists and linguists since the 1960s have traditionally emphasized the burlesque, comical, and picturesque aspects of the speech form. Spanish philologist Frida Weber de Kurlat, for example, describes the *habla de negros* according to its “posibilidades estéticas y dramáticas puramente cómico-burlescas” (“aesthetic and dramatic possibilities that are purely comical and burlesque”; 139). Even recent scholarship has repeatedly insisted that “black Spanish must be understood as a linguistic fabrication used as a comic device . . . [that] is ‘a purely literary language’” (Beusterien, “Talking Black” 83, citing Lipski, “El español bozal” 305).⁵

I propose an alternative reading of *habla de negros* that, while acknowledging that this comical and burlesque speech employs racist appropriations of Africanized Spanish, also highlights its inherent subversive power within a particular historical context. The presence of Africanized Spanish in Góngora’s poem underscores the possibilities of personhood found in black Africans, as articulated through the poet’s allegorical exegesis of the Song of Songs’s well-known message “nigra sum, sed Formosa” (“I am black but beautiful”; Canticles, Song of Songs 1:5). My reading of Góngora’s “Santísimo Sacramento” will further illuminate the poem’s transformation of sacred subject matter and religious topics by highlighting secular themes—that is, the poetic use of black African voices and the “Zambambú” song and dance tune—to demonstrate that the pairing of secular and non-secular themes emphasizes in suggestive ways how black slaves in early modern Spanish society might profess their religious devotion.⁶ In what follows, I will sketch out the ways that black women’s religious piety is articulated through cosmetics and fine clothing. I argue that the poet relies on each of these modes of signification in order to portray the black body—in spirit and flesh—in communion with Christ’s Body, and as beautiful and human, despite the ambiguities inherent in the poem’s *habla de negros* speech form. Góngora’s poetic portraiture of the black female body vis-à-vis the trope of fine clothing—specifically in the poem’s repetition of the “Zambambú” medley—allows me to contest literary critical readings of the song as a purely racist appropriation of black cultural expression and voice. I contend that Góngora develops his image of black women, in relation to cosmetic adornment and fine clothing, through elevating *habla de negros* speech as part of the *culterano* repertoire or *culto* style.⁷ Beauty and personhood, as the character Juana reiterates throughout the poem, operate as

two categories that resist early modern European perceptions of black skin as ugly and unfavorable.

As we shall see, throughout “Santísimo Sacramento” Góngora catapults the question of black beauty into a larger discussion related to cosmetic discourse and the rhetorical value of clothing. This move is especially interesting since at the time black women figured less prominently within debates on the cosmetic arts. The corpus of cosmetic discourse familiar to early modern Spanish poets can be traced back to the fourth century BCE, when the Stoics denounced the use of cosmetics by both men and women. As Marcia L. Colish has shown, the Stoics’s basic teaching that it is immoral for both men and women to alter their natural appearance was “reformulated” by early Christian theologians from the third century to the early fifth century (3). Góngora, like his medieval predecessors and Renaissance-Baroque contemporaries, follows the cosmetic discourses of Tertullian, Saint Cyprian, Saint Ambrose, and Saint Jerome, thus applying cosmetic theology specifically to women and linking it to the antifeminist tradition they inherited from the ancient schools of rhetoric.⁸ Paraphrasing R. Howard Bloch’s argument, Annette Drew-Bear observes that “women in the early centuries of Christianity were identified with ornament, artifice, and decoration, and . . . their painting themselves was regarded as unnatural devil’s work, recapitulating the Fall of man” (Drew-Bear 20).⁹

Although Góngora sustains the antifeminist tradition of cosmetic theology he has inherited, the poet also subverts its ideological underpinnings in “Santísimo Sacramento” vis-à-vis black women’s face painting. Modern readers must recognize that, as Annette Drew-Bear notes, “the painted face both in society and on the stage was seen in moral terms” (13). Góngora inverts the ideological constraints of the antifeminist cosmetic tradition by heightening a moral issue central to “Santísimo Sacramento” through Juana’s and Clara’s application of black eyeliner. The two women’s moral status is predicated on the connection between their black bodies (especially their faces) and references to the feast of Corpus Christi. Thus the poem stages a moral argument about the subversive power of the bodily inscription of black women’s cosmetic practice and consumption of fine clothing.

My aim throughout this essay is to do more than simply examine cosmetics and clothing, but instead to demonstrate how references to these material objects in the poem contribute to the formulation of black Africans’ racial subjectivity. Juana and Clara, for instance, use cosmetics and dress up in fine

clothing as a means of legitimating their humanity and their feminine beauty. In the process, Góngora's Baroque poetics emerge as a space in which the circulation of objects and their signifying practices work to establish the identity of early modern Hispanic Others. Thus as a staged poetic performance heard and seen by a multicultural and multiracial public in the Cathedral of Córdoba, "Santísimo Sacramento" gives readers a glimpse of how public holidays and religious feasts such as Corpus Christi become an opportunity for the Africanized expression of a subversive, and paradoxical, use of cosmetics and clothing.

**"Alcoholemo la cara / e lavémono la vista":
Cosmetic Ontologies, Cosmetic Subversions**

ALCOHELA. Nombre arábigo diminutivo *qubiletum*, negrilla, del verbo *quehale*, que vale ser negro.

ALCOHOL. Es cierto género de polvos, que con un palito de hinojo teñido en ellos le pasan por los ojos para aclarar la vista y poner negras las pestañas y para hermostrarlos. Dice Urrea ser arábigo, y en su propia terminación decirse, *qubulum*, del verbo *quehale*, que vale negrear, o poner negras las pestañas. Y es así que con el alcohol parece agrandarse los ojos, y por eso le llaman *plathyophthalmon*, productor y dilatador de los ojos. (Covarrubias 96)

KOHL. The diminutive Arabic name for *qubiletum*, black in color, from the verb *quehale*, which means (to be) black.

KOHL. Is a kind of powdery substance with which a small stick of dyed fennel is used to outline and highlight the eyes and darken the eyelashes for beautification. And thus with the kohl, the eyes are enlarged and widened; that is why they call it *plathyophthalmon*, the producer and enhancer of eyes.

"En la fiesta del Santísimo Sacramento" contains only two very short lines that reference cosmetic application: "[a]lcoholemo la cara / e lavémono la vista" ("Let's make up [blacken] our faces with kohl liner and wash our eyes [white]"; 3–4). Yet in these poetic statements resounds, as I will argue henceforth, Góngora's strategy for underscoring larger ideological perceptions of Blackness, cosmetics, gender, and slavery; perceptions that dramatize, in poetic terms, the paradoxical belief that black beauty is undesirable, yet at the same time func-

tions as a sign of spiritual beauty.¹⁰

Góngora's use of the word *alcohol* is revealing. To speak of cosmetic adornment he could have chosen a noun such as *afeites* ("makeup"; "cosmetics") or the verb *pintar* ("to paint"). But instead he turns *alcohol* into a verb—"alcoholar"—in order to reproduce a form of cosmetic representation that, on the one hand, exaggerates black beauty—in hyperbolic form as an effective reading of "alcoholemo la cara"—and, on the other, creates a racially charged textual production when examined from a material perspective. The fine powder antimony sulfide, also known as *alcohol*, is slathered on top of black skin to blacken it even more. It is important to note that the circulation of the words *tinte* and *tizne*, or "ink," also plays a central role in early modern Spanish writers' textual productions of material perspectives on cosmetic representation in relation to bodily perspiration, as conveyed in Clara's abject racialized claim in lines 24 and 25: "Mas tinta sudamo, Juana, / que dos pruma de crivana" ("But we sweat more black ink, Juana, than a scribe's two quills"). The same materials used to make black ink—alum and galls—figured prominently as ingredients in cosmetic recipes and preparations for darkening both black and white skin.

The word *alcohela*, defined by Covarrubias in the two above epigraphs as an etymological variant of *alcohol*, points to a suggestive reading of Góngora's canny usage of *alcohol* to describe Juana and Clara's cosmetic work. Covarrubias tells us that "alcohela" literally means *to be black*. In the opening lines of "Santísimo Sacramento," Góngora has his two black female characters—particularly through Juana's voice—announce their racial blackness by physically blackening their faces with "alcohol." This is what I regard as Góngora's cosmetic ontology for black women. Góngora's cosmetic production of race manifests itself in what might be called cosmetic subversion—that is, black women's subversive ways of asserting their racial identities by reclaiming cosmetic practices and material culture. The poet's inversion of the verb *alcoholar*, through the rhetorical figure of chiasmus, for example, is a noteworthy example of this cosmetic subversion. Instead of the expected "alcoholemo la vista [los ojos] / e lavémono la cara" ("Let's make up [blacken] our eyes with kohl liner and wash our faces"; 3–4, emphasis mine), Juana presents a different model—opposite to that of white women—that is, blackening the face with a kohl utensil and washing away the whiteness from their eyes. My reading of Juana and Clara's "incorrect" way of adorning themselves suggests possibilities of building on other scholars' considerations of Góngora as a Baroque poet who redirects Petrarchist codes. As Ignacio Navarrate argues, "[Góngora] must be

taken into account, for his redirection of the Petrarchist tradition subverted its canons to the point that they were nearly redefined" (191). If in his lyric love poetry Góngora is already subverting the Petrarchist codes, canons, and topoi in the way Navarrete describes, "Santísimo Sacramento" goes even farther, completely turning them on their head.

Góngora defends black beauty by indirectly contrasting its naturalness with the facial cosmetics typically linked to white women. Although the cosmetic practices of white Spanish women do not appear in "Santísimo Sacramento," I would argue that the poem does, in fact, reference them indirectly by highlighting black beauty through superimposing black-colored cosmetics—as both a satirical questioning of and an alternative ideal to white beauty—in order to praise the *plainness* of black skin as that which is true and valuable, for it is not painted white. Góngora leads by example, in that he disavows his fellow contemporary poets' and playwrights' tendentious efforts to denigrate and tease black women as "galguinegras" and hideous harlots.¹¹ Nor does Góngora's depiction of blacks as simple and plain perpetuate the reading of the happy-go-lucky *bozal* simpleton stereotype overemphasized by scholars. Instead, Góngora's poetic representation of Juana and Clara's cosmetic subversion upholds black women's beauty as exemplary in comparison to the received wisdom that warned against the adulterous and dangerous effects of cosmetics on white women.

Cosmetic application, according to the anti-cosmetic tracts propagated by the moralists and theologians of the time, betrays the natural beauty God supposedly bestowed upon women. In early modern Spain, for example, moralists, literary figures, and theologians alike perceived (white) women's use of cosmetics to be a peculiarly feminine vice. Like the Stoics and early Christian theologians previously mentioned, Juan Luis Vives in his *De institutione feminae christianae* (1524) condemns the practice of face painting in both England and Spain by ascribing diabolic origins to it. Vives's Spanish translation *Instrucción de la mujer cristiana* (1528) cautions that "los ángeles malos . . . enseñaron alcoholar los ojos, arrebolar la cara, enrubiar los cabellos y trastocar toda la naturaleza y forma del guesto y cuerpo" ("bad angels instructed [women] how to outline their eyes in black pencil, to put on rouge, to bleach their hair, and to disturb the entirety of Nature's bodily and facial form"; 73–74). In the eleventh chapter of *La perfecta casada* (1583), Fray Luis de León also berates those women who waste "tres horas afilando la ceja, y pintando la cara, y negociando con su espejo que mienta y la llame hermosa" ("three hours threading their eyebrows,

painting their faces, and negotiating with their mirror, which lies by calling them beautiful"; *Obras completas* 286–87). Góngora engages his contemporaries' anti-cosmetic sentiments by way of Juana and Clara's unseemly application of black eyeliner makeup to accentuate their plain black skin.

Plain black faces—either without makeup or cosmetically adorned with black-colored makeup—inadvertently buttress the anti-cosmetic tradition propelled by Christian apologists since antiquity. Tertullian's "On the Apparel of Women," for instance, associates cosmetics and hairdressing with deceitful devilish deeds that betray the very roots of Christian devotion. Citing Tertullian, de León in his *La perfecta casada* (1583) warns:

Salid, salid aderezadas con los afeites y con los trajes vistosos de los Apóstoles. Poneos el blanco de la sencillez, el colorado de la honestidad; alcoholad con la vergüenza los ojos, y con el espíritu modesto y callado. (Qtd. from Dopico Black, *Perfect Wives, Other Women* 252n74)

Go forth to meet those angels, adorned with the cosmetics and ornaments of the Prophets and Apostles. Let your whiteness flow from simplicity, let modesty be the cause of your rosy complexion; paint your eyes with demureness, your mouth with silence.

Góngora echoes de León's caution against the dangerous and alluring subject of cosmetic excess by focusing on black women's unadorned black faces. The *negras alcoholadas* of the poem must be modest and simple, for they must adequately prepare their bodies for Christ on the Corpus Christi feast day. If Juana and Clara's blackened faces symbolize paradoxically an ideal of modesty and simplicity that is traditionally referenced through Whiteness, then the cosmetic ontology of Juana and Clara sustains itself.

Black skin color serves as a literary trope that supports anti-cosmetic discourse, especially when black women are using cosmetics to make their skin blacker. Spanish historian Aurelia Martín Casares explains:

[L]a palabra "negro" es la que presupone un mayor carácter de estabilidad de la condición personal, puesto que su referente es la naturaleza. El término "negro" establece un vínculo indeleble con la biología (la piel negra) y, en consecuencia, remite a la naturaleza. Para los pensadores de la España de los tiempos modernos, la naturaleza representaba la inmutabilidad y el estatismo; existía un estado "natural" de las cosas y de las personas (de ahí el "derecho natural," *ius gentium*) considerado inalterable y

aquisá, aquisá;
aquisá como entre flore.

TODOS. *Aquisá.*
 NEGRA. *Aquisá quien mata y sana.*
 TODOS. *Aquisá.*
 NEGRA. *La nengla como una flore.*
 TODOS. *Aquisá.*
 NEGRA. *Que non si pone colore.*
 TODOS. *Aquisá.*
 NEGRA. *La cara tiene di plata.*
 TODOS. *Aquisá.*
 NEGRA. *Aunque calza paragata.*
 TODOS. *Aquisá.*
 NEGRA. *Dama pone solimane.*
 TODOS. *Aquisá.*
 NEGRA. *No la quiere lo galane.*
 TODOS. *Aquisá.*
 NEGRA. *Negra tiene fresicura.*
 TODOS. *Aquisá. (422)*

THEY SING. Here he is: he hasn't gone away! Here he is: there's Mister Cupid! Here he is, here he is! Here he is: there in the flowers.
 Here he is!

CHORUS. Here he is!
 BLACK LADY. Here he is: the one who slays and heals.
 CHORUS. Here he is!
 BLACK LADY. The black lady is like a flower.
 CHORUS. Here he is!
 BLACK LADY. Who doesn't paint her face.
 CHORUS. Here he is!
 BLACK LADY. The black lady has a silver-coin-shaped face.
 CHORUS. Here he is!
 BLACK LADY. Even though she laces up in espadrilles.
 CHORUS. Here he is!
 BLACK LADY. White lady wears that *solimán*.
 CHORUS. Here he is!
 BLACK LADY. No suitor wants her!

CHORUS. Here he is!
 BLACK LADY. Black lady got that freshness!
 CHORUS. Here he is!

This song reminds its audience that white feminine beauty is undesirable and untrustworthy, for it is fleeting and lacks truth or value. “Solimane” is the makeup that falsely makes ladies’ faces white, *not* their natural skin color. Covarrubias warns his early modern Spanish readers of argent’s detrimental influence. He cautions, “[*solimán*] es cerca de nosotros por su mala calidad y mortifero efeto” (“watch out for argent’s poor quality and dangerous effect on us”; 1448).¹² De Vega’s *letrilla* embodies black cultural performance through call-and-response (antiphony) cheers and tongue-in-cheek taunts borrowed from West African musical systems. The playwright’s *negra* and black chorus playfully insult a conversational adversary—white women who slather their faces with *solimán*, emphasizing the unnatural and negative effects of the makeup described in Covarrubias’s entry. De Vega’s theatricalized performance showcasing West African call-and-response cheers coupled with the gibes sung by the chorus render black subjectivity active and visible for early modern Spanish audiences. Supported by the unified black voices of the chorus—which repeatedly acclaims “Aquisá”—Cupid and the unnamed Black Lady work together to undo Seville’s social disorder surrounding matters of love: he advises all *galanes* to pursue women untouched by cosmetic trifles. Like Góngora in “Santísimo Sacramento,” de Vega utilizes black women for subversive ends by presenting them as exemplars of what is natural and true. Black skin—the Black Lady of the *letrilla* sings “que non si pone color”—constitutes truth, and white skin painted with *solimán*, once again, represents artificiality. As a rule of thumb, de Vega’s dramatic narrative pushes for an aesthetic ideal promoting black beauty as the ultimate embodiment of the feminine ideal for *galanes* because of their so-called “fresicura,” or “freshness.” This word takes on various meanings, highlighting the natural beauty and spontaneous energy of black women.

There is, however, another definition of freshness that applies to this context. Covarrubias explains: “mujer fresca la que tiene carne . . . y no de faciones delicadas ni adamada” (“the fresh woman is the one who has meat on her bones and does not have delicate, ladylike features”; 927). Covarrubias’s definition, as it applies to de Vega’s *negra*, elucidates a gendered and racialized reading of her body and reveals that cosmetics cannot compete with carnal pleasures. The

realness and naturalness of a so-called big-boned black woman's body, as the penultimate line suggests, trumps the deceptive seductions of a white woman's painted face; the black female body, instead, always wins over a male suitor's heart and appetite for true love and carnal pleasures.

In arguing that in "Santísimo Sacramento" Góngora treats cosmetic adornment as a multilayered hyperbole (which Góngora constructs in two ways: by the black-colored *alcohol* superimposed over Juana and Clara's black skin and by the hyperbolic *habla de negros* language they speak), I am not suggesting that Góngora depicts the image of cosmetics vis-à-vis Juana and Clara in order to exacerbate xenophobic fears among his audience, although anxieties surrounding the so-called racial "Other" in early modern Spain certainly recur as a salient discursive element in Renaissance-Baroque texts and treatises. Instead, his representation of cosmetics in the poem addresses cultural forms and practices that differ from those to which early modern Spanish society might be accustomed. Nor does Góngora's portrayal of Juana and Clara communicate the notion of their face painting as a desire to hide their Blackness, which would implicitly categorize their souls as strange and deformed.

The Africanized *habla de negros* language in which Juana and Clara converse reveals Góngora's ability to elevate his poetic image of black women through his Spanish Baroque *culterano* repertoire or *culto* style. The *culterano* repertoire consists of the enrichment of poetic language through the intensification of Latin, classical allusions, and sentence structure. Arthur Terry defines the term as "a conscious attempt to enrich the language of poetry by assimilating it more closely to Latin, thus removing it as far as possible from ordinary discourse" (53). Góngora's *culterano* style, on the one hand, enhances both his own poetic repertoire and the *habla de negros* linguistic corpus, and on the other, constitutes an alternative way of reading the languages of beauty and Blackness altogether. The signs of *culteranismo* are not only evident in Góngora's major poems, but also equally apparent in "Santísimo Sacramento" where they have the effect of alienating the reader. I am not suggesting that Góngora's *culteranismo* functions differently in different poems. I read his *habla de negros* register as an Africanized poetic exercise of *culteranismo* that achieves a similar kind of alienation by confusing the reader. And it is precisely the occasional unintelligibility of *habla de negros* that warrants the need for Góngora to, in fact, turn to his *culteranismos* in order to illuminate deeper racial and religious meanings in "Santísimo Sacramento" concerning Blackness, cosmetics, and humanity.

The following portion of the dialogue between Juana and Clara presents the clearest examples of Góngora's *culto* style spoken in *habla de negros*:

Clara: *Samo negra pecandora,
e branca la Sacramenta.*

Juana: *La alma sa como la denta,
Crara mana* (lines 7–10)

Clara: We're black sinners and the Sacrament is white.

Juana: The soul is white like the teeth, sister Clara

Words like *negra* ("black"), *pecandora* ("sinful"; "misguided"), *branca* ("white"), *Sacramenta* ("Sacrament"), *alma* ("soul"), and *denta* ("teeth") owe their force to the skillful handling of metaphor and paradox. Clara's sadness originates from her deep-seated belief that she is a black sinner ("negra pecandora"). Her Spanish name *Clara*—the feminine counterpart to the male adjectival form *claro*—denotes all that is clean, clear, light, and pure. Throughout the poem it will be Clara, in pursuit of her clarity and Whiteness, who emphasizes the sinful, misguided darkness of Juana and herself. As a *culteranismo*, "clara" symbolizes all that is bathed in (sun)light. "Claro," according to Covarrubias, "[es] lo que se opone a lo oscuro, tenebroso y dificultoso" ("opposes that which is dark, tenebrous, and unpleasant"; 553). Covarrubias's definition elucidates Góngora's metaphorical referencing of Clara's rejection of all that is dark and tenebrous. Her black body is an affront to her ontological existence, as is reflected by her negative response "¡Ay, Jesús, cómo sa mu trista!" ("Oh Lord, I'm so sad!"; line 5), which is a clear indication of her reluctance to blacken her face with cosmetics.

Clara's rejection of Blackness is worth examination. I read her as a guardian of an ideological Whiteness bound by allegiances to Counter-Reformation orthodoxy and racial purity, who takes on an entirely opposite meaning in relation to Juana's reiterated claim that "La alma sa como la denta, / Crara mana" ("The soul, Clara my sister, is [white] like the teeth"; lines 9–10). Juana, in her celebration of being black, sheds light on Clara's epithet that equates people of African descent with sin and white people with God's holy sacraments.¹³ Victor Stoichita, in his comments on Christian representations of black identity, correctly observes that "what 'whitens the soul' of the black is the perpetual presence of Christ's sacrifice. The same message is reiterated, *mutatis mutandis*, in textual glosses on the sacrament of the Eucharist" (201).

To nuance Juana and Clara's ideological opposition, we might observe how syntax plays an important part in Góngora's skillful handling of metaphor and paradox, particularly when certain key images are stressed. Thus, lines 7 through 9 place six nouns in apposition—*negra* ("black"), *pecandora* ("sinner"), *branca* ("white"), *Sacramenta* ("Sacrament"), *alma* ("soul"), and *denta* ("teeth")—nouns that are clearly distinguished by their word order in each line, while Juana uses *como* ("as"; "like") to indicate with a simile that black people are in fact humans who possess souls. These words produce parallel constructions that reformulate, on the eve of Corpus Christi, the conceptualization and racialization of Blackness in early modern Spanish society as something beautiful and human. Góngora makes this possible by repeating on various occasions the biblical phrase "I am black but beautiful" (Song of Songs 1:5). This well known expression becomes the central formulation for both defining and problematizing the conceptions of black beauty and black humanity in many early modern European texts, primarily in poetry, that cross geographical lines.¹⁴ In the Hispanic literary tradition the Song of Songs passage appears in numerous literary works as a salient trope that represents, on the one hand, Black voices characterized by *habla de negros* speech, and on the other, a platform for contemplating the moral and racial constitution of black Africans. In the following section I will turn to the poetic usage of the phrase "I am black but beautiful" in order to explore the humanization of blacks in Góngora's work. If, through the employment of references to cosmetics, the poem implies that black is beautiful because of its pure simplicity, it also follows that larger issues of black beauty and black humanity are affirmed more assertively in a biblical context in concert with the Corpus Christi feast day—as we will see in the pages that follow.

"Aunque samo negra, sa hermosa tú":

The Song of Songs and the Quest for Humanity

In the spirit of honoring the Corpus Christi feast day and the institution of Catholic sacraments, Góngora's *letrilla* "Santísimo Sacramento" lauds black beauty and black humanity in ways that draw on other early modern Spanish texts. In seventeenth-century Spain, for example, Covarrubias's *Tesoro* defines the word *negro* in terms of the Song of Songs's proverbial lesson that blacks not be deplored based on the color of their skin and lowly lot in society: "Aunque negros, gente somos" ("Although black we are people"; Covarrubias 1309). The Song of Songs's "I am black but beautiful" maxim gives an ontolog-

ical status to black Africans in early modern Spain as subjects; it is the phrase that makes their visibility as subjects legible to white spectators. Clara reads black people literally as misguided sinners and white people as holy and pure like the Blessed Sacrament. Biblical passages support Clara's linking of Blackness to sin; for example, in Lamentations 4 the Jews are described in verse 7, before the exile, as pure and white, and in verse 8, having sinned, as having become black. Yet Clara's negative opinions do not fully represent Góngora's position on Blackness in the poem. He utilizes Juana's voice, instead, to vindicate black Africans. "La alma sa como la denta" ("The soul is [white] like the teeth"), Juana says, thereby defining the category "negro/a" in opposition to Clara's denigrating anti-black connotations. It is in Clara's rejection of being black—namely in response to Juana's call for them to further blacken their faces with *alcohol*—that Góngora then establishes a project for humanizing his black subjects. Juana's claim that the soul is like the teeth contests Clara's problematic racialized binary oppositions by suggesting that sins (*pecar*; *pecandora*) and the Sacrament (*Sacramento*) possess no affiliation with color or race. Moreover, Juana does not speak in racial terms when she retorts that the soul is arbitrarily white like teeth, or for that matter any soulless/lifeless object that is white in color. Carrying more of an ambiguous meaning, the "denta" to which Juana refers bear no racial and religious charge—unlike Clara's preference for the words *sin* and *Sacramento* as racialized lexical categories. "Denta" might also be understood as arbitrarily "white" body parts, such as bones and (white) hair, intrinsic to people of all races. Góngora's Baroque poetic reiteration of "denta" further humanizes blacks because all human beings eat with their teeth while consuming the holy sacrament. So, are the theological categorizations of black people and the reception of sacraments two mutually exclusive concepts? According to Juana they are not, for blacks are living beings that have souls and therefore are entitled to receive the sacraments. To possess a soul is to be human. To prove blacks have souls Góngora echoes the biblical phrase "I am black but beautiful." Without the reiteration of this passage in "Santísimo Sacramento" blacks cannot articulate their agency as religious subjects who in fact possess souls.

The poem best illustrates Góngora's celebration of black beauty and black humanity in the following lines spoken by Juana:

*Pongamo fustana,
e bailemo alegre;*

que aunque samo negra,
sa hermosa tú.
Zambambú, morenica de Congo,
zambambú.
Zambambú, qué galana me pongo,
Zambambú. (11–18)

Let's put on our fustians and boogey down. For even though we are black, you're beautiful. Zambambú, little black chick from the Congo, Zambambú. Zambambú, I'm getting dolled up real nice, Zambambú.

“Zambambú, morenica de Congo, / zambambú. / Zambambú, qué galana me pongo, / zambambú” are some of the most frequently cited and studied lines in Spanish Golden Age scholarship that deals with blacks.¹⁵ The rhythmic structure and “African”-sounding words capture elements of what might be seen as a version of an early modern *poesía negra* (“Black Poetry”) that would later influence Latin America’s own forms of *poesía negra* during the *negrista* movement in the 1920s and 1930s. “Zambambú” is not an “African” word; rather, it is a fetishization of an Africanized phonetic utterance constructed by European fantasies about the *habla de negros*. But it is important to consider that the so-called “African”-sounding word “Zambambú,” in fact, could have been heard *and* spoken by blacks at Catholic feast day ceremonies and processions. Juan Aranda Doncel of the Real Academia de Córdoba shows that as early as 1601 blacks performed in their own dance troupes something generally called “Danza de negros.” In these groups black men and women—as well as whites that covered their faces with masks—dressed in brightly colored silk and velvet fabrics, bonnets, crowns, feathers, jewelry, and other types of head ornaments. Period instruments such as *vihuelas* (“baroque guitars”), bells, drums, flutes, whistles, rattles, and tambourines were played. In these performances the blacks of *danzas de negros* sang and spoke *habla de negros* as an example of social meaning articulated by people of African descent.

As an example of *habla de negros* speech, “Zambambú” captures the essence of Juana’s racial performativity that celebrates black beauty and black humanity. Racial performativity informs the process by which Góngora, through Juana as a black woman, invests her black body with social meaning. The social meaning of Juana is anything but fixed; instead, it is hybrid, paradoxical, and slippery. Góngora’s representation of black speech can therefore

be read as an example of Bakhtinian heteroglossia, or the text's multiplicity of social voices and speech types.

In spite of the seemingly racist objectification and usurpation of Africanized Spanish in "Santísimo Sacramento," I would urge readers to recognize how Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia helps us to understand how the unwritten speech of black Africans in Spain could be empowering. Góngora's treatment of *habla de negros* in the Zambambú verses shows blacks speaking with an expressive power, a linguistic force, that operates outside of European control. And in their expressive power lies black Africans' agency to articulate their personhood in early modern Spain.

To address the redemptive power in "I am black but beautiful" as a humanizing maxim, Góngora relies on the finery of clothing. Dressing up nicely works as a mediating act—as seen most notably in passages that declare "pongamo fustana" ("let's put on our skirts"; line 11) or "qué galana me pongo" ("Oh how nice I'm dolled up"; line 17). These pronouncements implicitly evoke the biblical passage "I am black but beautiful" in response to "Zambambú, morenica de Congo" ("Zambambú, little black chick from the Congo"; line 15); they also prepare the body, in spirit and flesh, for Christ's Body on Corpus Christi, as Juana urges Clara to get dolled up and dance happily with her—"pongamo fustana, / e bailemo alegra; / que aunque samo negra, / sa hermosa tú" ("let's put on our skirts and dance happily; for although we are black, you are beautiful"; 11–14).

The audience knows that Juana and Clara are both slaves because of line 6: "¿Qué tene? / ¿Pringa señora?" ("What's the matter with you? Did the mistress lard you?"). For blacks the verb *pringar* denotes a common form of punishment by singeing their skin with pork fat. Lines 15 through 17—"morenica de Congo, / qué galana me pongo" ("little black chick from the Congo / I get dolled up real nice")—illustrate the degree to which Juana is an arbiter of style, thus disavowing her triply marked marginal status as a black female slave. Her joy and gallant behavior plucks both her and Clara from the cultural confinement of slave life. While no black slave—unless they were objects of display for royal families and officials of a royal Court—possessed such fine clothing to celebrate on a religious feast day as Corpus Christi,¹⁶ I would like to argue that Juana uses clothing and dress to define her identity in an early modern Spanish context. It is through the act of dressing up in fine clothing, specifically as a bodily articulation of self-fashioning, that Juana particularly defines her status as a human being. Moreover, Juana's celebratory cheer, expressed by getting

dressed up in fustian, calls attention to carnival's ability to empower the disadvantaged through the reversal of social rank and roles. We might borrow Monica L. Miller's term "stylin' out," in order to read the representation of clothing and dress, as it is directly related to both Juana and Clara in the "Santísimo Sacramento" and black African slaves in early modern Spain at large, as practically and symbolically important to a slave's sense of individuality and liberty. "Black people," says Miller, "are known for 'stylin' out,' dressing to the nines, showing their sartorial stuff, especially when the occasion calls for it, and more tellingly, often when it does not" (1). Miller's conception of "stylin' out" grounds the idea of the black slave—especially Góngora's Spanish Baroque portrayal of Juana's embodiment of it in the poem—as expressing his/her own sense of style. Góngora's poem highlights how stylin' out signals the black slaves' own imperative for constructing identity, literally and materially, which potentially positions them as free-thinking human subjects.

Bakhtin's carnivalesque theory can also be used to explore how racial hierarchies in "Santísimo Sacramento" are inverted: black slaves dress like their white masters and other free blacks who have access to social privilege and power. The motif of "Juana the *galana*" best exemplifies this inversion by rupturing the meaning of an assumed elegance and class privilege associated with the adjective *galana*. Covarrubias's dictionary entry on the word *gala* helps elucidate the brilliant layering of poetic and social meanings that the word *galana* encompasses for Góngora's Juana:

GALA. Es el vestido curioso y de fiesta, alegre y regocijo. O se dijo gala . . . porque la gala hermosa y adorna al que trae. (943)

GALA. Is the neat dress that represents merrymaking, happiness, and joy. Or one called it *gala* because it beautifies and adorns the one who wears it.

The noun *gala* operates as the grammatical nucleus of "galana." It disrupts the tendentious reading of the Zambambú passage's "African"-sounding words and dance as lascivious and sultry. Inspired by the carnival moment, "galana" embodies stylin' out, while also functioning through rhyme to echo the word "fustana." Covarrubias's definition of *gala* coincides nicely with Juana's exemplary self-fashioning as "galana." Covarrubias's explanation that the "*gala* beautifies and adorns the one who wears it" demonstrates how Juana too, through Góngora's poetic devices, participates in beautifying and humanizing practices.

Once the “Zambambú” song ends, Juana’s tone changes as she affirms that blacks are not only beautiful, but actually people: “que aunque negra, sa persona” [although black, I am a person]. To be a person is to be human. In lines 19 through 23 Juana conveys this quite assertively:

Vamo a la sagraria, prima,
veremo la procesiona,
que aunque negra, sa persona
que la perrera me estima. (19–23, emphasis mine)

Let’s go to the tabernacle, sister. There we’ll see the procession. *Even though I’m black I am a person, and the keeper of hounds admires me.*

Juana’s commentary about “la perrera”—which I translate from the *habla de negros* as “perrero,” the keeper of hounds or dog catcher—follows the same structure as “even though I am black, I am beautiful.” Whereas Juana says, “even though I am black, the dog catcher values me.” In light of this article’s emphasis on black Africans’ quest for humanity and the Song of Songs, lines 21 and 22 are significant because they reveal the delicate relationship between Juana’s personhood and the dog catcher’s esteem for her as a person. As policing bodies for cathedrals, the *perrero* and his dogs are traditionally at odds with black slaves. (Let us consider, for example, Miguel de Cervantes’s exemplary novel *El coloquio de los perros* where the virtuous dog Berganza bites and mauls a black female slave for her immoral behavior.) Black women in early modern Spanish poetry and theatrical works were often called “putas negras” and “galguinegras,” especially when they were debased and dehumanized in animalistic ways in literature by Hispanic male writers. In contrast to that tradition, Góngora does not use violent language to name and describe his two female protagonists. Juana acquires instead her humanity through the *perrero*’s admiration. Góngora’s referencing of the *perrero*—as mediated through his connection to dogs—ultimately highlights the unique way in which he forges sympathetic imagination through the animal.¹⁷

This above-cited excerpt signals an important ideological transition along the lines of racial identity and racial pride. En route to the Cathedral of Córdoba to see the Corpus Christi processions, Juana evokes biblical scripture in order to legitimate a sense of religious belonging to her own behalf and Clara’s. While singing “Zambambú,” Juana cites the Song of Songs to articulate black beauty, but in this passage she moves from celebrating black beauty to ac-

knowledging the humanity in black people. Juana proves she is in fact human based on the ways in which the mystical energy present in the church and around a statue of the Virgin Mary moves her: “Mira la cabilda, cuánta / va en rengre noble señora, / cuya virtud me namora, / cuya majestá me panta” (“Look! So many people congregate around the Virgin Mary, of whose virtue I’m enamored and whose grandeur bewilders me”; lines 30–33). This vivid image of a spiritually moved Juana dropping to her knees validates her commitment and devotion to Christ’s body and the Catholic Church’s holy sacraments. Through this imagery Góngora codifies an example of the humanized black that coincides with Catholic *Christianitas*.

In one sense, the poem ends without any concrete closure, leaving Juana and Clara’s racial politics unresolved. Their final exchange reflects feelings of ambivalence and paradox:

- Clara: ¿Si viene la Obispa santa?
¡Chillémola!
- Juana: ¡Ay, qué cravela!
Pégate, Crara, cüela;
la mano le besará,
que mano que tanto da
en Congo aun sará bien quista.
- Clara: ¡Ay, Jesús, como sa mu trista! etc. (lines 34–40)
- Clara: If the holy Bishop comes, what shall we do? Let’s cry out to him!
- Juana: Oh what a beautiful carnation! Get nearer, Clara, scoot in! I would kiss his hand; a hand that favors us blacks so much that even in Congo he will be well loved.
- Clara: Oh Lord, I’m so sad!

The poem’s closing passage reminds its audience that the *letrilla* is meant to pave the way for further performative devotion related to Corpus Christi. Juana and Clara perform their devotion to the body of Christ by smelling the carnation and attempting to kiss the Bishop’s hand. Reimagining the function and meaning of Corpus Christi, Teofilo F. Ruiz emphasizes that “the symbolic valence of all forms of ritual performance—and Corpus Christi processions were highly ritualized events—depend to a large extent on reiteration. It is

through repetition that what is new becomes familiar, and then traditional" (270). The bishop's ritualized presence—most likely that of the poem's commissioner, Córdoba Bishop Diego de Mardones—at Corpus Christi festivities exemplifies an aspect of reiteration expressed by Ruiz: "The seemingly repetitive nature of the Corpus Christi performance," he adds, "[consists of] the annual perambulation of the Host throughout the streets of Spanish cities, the order of the procession, the competition of ecclesiastical establishments, civic authorities, and crafts to sponsor the most lavish or artistic representations" (270). The repetition of the bishop's presence in the poem manifests as a hypothetical moment articulated by Clara's dubious inquiry: "Si viene la Obispa santa?" [If the holy Bishop comes, what shall we do?]. Ruiz's historicized account informs us of the inconsistent and mutable nature of Corpus Christi celebrations and processions.

In the closing strophe Góngora acts more as a painter than a poet. As Dámaso Alonso describes, he "pone delante de nuestros ojos, directamente, a la naturaleza misma" [places in front of our eyes, directly, Nature itself] (19). The visual image of Juana and Clara smelling the carnation constructs them as "civilized" human beings. To kiss the bishop's hand (should he attend the celebrations at their parish) would thus erase in the two slave women any ugly and unfavorable attributes that might otherwise be ascribed to black Africans. This erasure of negative associations is specifically mediated by, on the one hand, the black colored *alcohol* that highlights the beautiful naturalness and simplicity of their black skin and, on the other hand, the reiteration of the Song of Songs's message that blacks are both beautiful and human. The poem sustains this claim until its final lines when Juana reminds Clara that the bishop favors all blacks and that their love will be reciprocated. The moralizing power of the poem's final strophe softens Clara's pessimistic plea, "Oh Lord, I'm so sad!"

I would like to conclude by emphasizing that Góngora's poetics of Blackness in "Santísimo Sacramento" is also connected to the question of the Moor and the *morisco* in Spain. Góngora's poetic treatment of blacks negotiates the categories of humanness, intolerance, and personhood across various ethnic, racial, and religious divides. In comparison to Muslims of diverse ethnic backgrounds and colors (e.g., Berbers and Turks), Cristóbal Suárez de Figueroa in his 1615 *Plaza universal de todas las ciencias y artes* deems black slaves as the group with the most cooperative character, which ultimately makes them the easiest to Hispanicize.¹⁸ Suárez de Figueroa's impression of blacks as obedient

and passive participates in a larger early modern Spanish metanarrative that constructs a binary opposition between black Africans, on the one hand, and Moors and *moriscos* (as well as gypsies and Jews) on the other, thus positioning blacks as “non-threatening ally” and Muslims as “threatening enemy.” “Santísimo Sacramento” establishes a poetic model and framework for subsequent practitioners of *habla de negros* language who compose *villancicos* to portray black Africans’ cultural and linguistic difference, most notably Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.¹⁹ As we have seen, what Góngora offers in his text is, on one level, a meditation on black female beauty and humanity, and on another, a poetic platform that depicts black Africans asserting their humanity and religious devotion.

NOTES

I wish to thank Georgina Dopico Black, Mary Louise Pratt, Israel Burshatin, Jim Fernández, Karen Stolley, and Ángel Díaz for their helpful comments, questions, and suggestions. I especially wish to thank John Beusterien and this article’s anonymous reviewers for their inspiration and generosity.

1. For additional definitions and historical contextualization of *villancico*, see Juan Díaz Rengifo’s *Arte poética española* (1592), Sebastián de Covarrubias’s *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* (1611), and the *Diccionario de Autoridades* (1737). Refer also to Robert Jammes’s edition of *Letrillas*, whose introduction situates the *letrilla* in its appropriate historical evolution in Spanish poetry.

2. *Moriscos* were so-called “New Christians” who had converted to Christianity from Islam. Israel Burshatin notes that

It has been estimated that between 275,000 and 300,000 Moriscos were forced into exile in the years between 1609 and 1614. Those who failed to assimilate—that is, learn to speak “in Christian” (*hablar en cristiano*), abandon their traditional dress, or intermarry with Old Christian families *early enough* to hide among the mass of Old Christians—were dispatched to other, at times equally uncongenial, places in North Africa and around the Mediterranean. (Many Moriscos, however, seem to have remained or managed to return at the expense of their cultural identity.) Thus, after 1614, the Morisco ceased to exist in the official discourse. (113, emphasis mine)

Georgina Dopico Black brilliantly nuances what Burshatin perceptively observes in the *morisco* population who had to assimilate “early enough” into early modern Spanish society. Capturing the “early enough” timeframe of *morisco* cultural, societal, and religious assimilation, Dopico Black focuses on one of the most controversial provisions of the 1609 Edict of Expulsion: the ghostly remains of *morisco* children. She explains that: “. . . all *morisco* children under the age of five [are] to be left behind in Spain in the custody of the state, perhaps to be adopted by a family of *cristianos viejos* [Old Christians], more likely, to be made their servant[s]” (Dopico Black, “Ghostly Remains” 93). She adds, “[u]nder no circumstances were children under the age of five to be permitted egress from Spain; children between six and ten years of age were allowed to leave only in those cases in which forcing

them to stay would incite a riot, as it was assumed that many of them were already ‘contaminated’” (93). Those interested in the sizable bibliography on the *morisco* population in early modern Spain should initially direct their attention to Mercedes García-Arenal’s *Los moriscos* (1996) and Antonio Domínguez Ortiz and Bernard Vincent’s *Historia de los moriscos. Vida y tragedia de una minoría* (1997).

3. For more precise archival documentation on black African dancers in Corpus Christi processions, see Aranda Doncel. Also refer to chapter 7 in Portús Pérez.

4. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

5. Lipski expounds upon this idea more fully in *A History of Afro-Hispanic Language*; see especially chapters 2 and 3.

6. Góngora discusses religious themes in other *letrillas* showcasing the voices of Arabs, blacks, and gypsies. See the following poems with the opening verses: *Al gualete, hejo / del senior Alá* (Arabs), *Oh, qué vimo Mangalena!* (black slaves), and *A la dina dana dina, la dina dana* (gypsies).

7. The *culterano* repertoire consists of the enrichment of poetic language through the intensification of Latin, classical allusions, and Latinate sentence structure.

8. See Colish, Drew-Bear, and Litchenstein for more elaboration on the rhetoric of cosmetics.

9. One of Góngora’s earliest predecessors to engage the debate on female cosmetic practices was Jorge Manrique in his poem “Coplas por la muerte de su padre” (pre-1500s). In Stanza 13 (lines 145–156) Manrique “describes the body as *cativa* [slave] and the soul as *señora* [lady; mistress], then decries the time spent adorning the former at the expense of the latter” (Domínguez 1). Manrique both alludes to and condemns the use of cosmetics by following the anti-cosmetic sentiments and misogynist tones found in ancient literature.

10. The use of “alcoholar” also means to “improve,” or to paint over, the face (i.e. “cleaning” or “whitening”). Bartolomé de Las Casas in *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de la África* envisions “alcoholar” in terms of how a historian improves his/her text by cleaning it: “la enjabona o alcohola con la misericordia y bondad de Dios” (63). Góngora in *Las firmezas de Isabela* (1610) uses *alcoholar* to refer to painting oneself red with blood—“mal hace quien la acrisola, / y peor quien se alcohola / con una navaja aguda” (1.979–81). Each of these two examples enriches my interpretation of Juana’s line “[a]lcoholo la cara / e lavémono la vista,” as she may be also referring to cleaning up (i.e., whitening) her body and chastising her sight. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer of this article for bringing these two insights to my attention.

11. Commonly referred to as “negra,” “puta negra,” “ébano,” “carbón,” “galguinegra,” and “azabache” in a variety of early modern Spanish and colonial Spanish American literary texts, black women have been aesthetically, culturally, and institutionally robbed of their agency and humanity. Fra-Molinero notes that black women in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish literature are “[c]haracterized by [their] bad temper, ‘Black’ speech, illusions of grandeur, and ‘loose’ sexual morals” (“The Condition of Black Women” 171). “[T]hese stereotypical *negras*,” he adds, “nevertheless revealed the other side of any stereotype: difficult relations between the free population and the slave communities in big cities, along with the constant threat to the stability and ‘honor’ of the families that owned them” (171–72).

12. To underscore the harmful deception created by *solimán*, the Baroque poet-satirist Francisco de Quevedo, in his sonnet “A una mujer afeitada,” equates women’s use of the foundation cream with Islamic heresy. He utilizes the cosmetic product as a medium to express deeper concerns related to the face paint’s Arab origins. In the poem, Quevedo

constructs a criticism of Islamic heresy and feminine vanity through the image of a woman applying the makeup at her vanity table as if it were the medieval Spanish Reconquest. Fray Luis de León condemns “solimán” as “la pozoña del solimán” (*Obras completas* 303).

13. An additional meaning that further ironizes the discussion of “Clara mana” manifests in the following translation: “flows clear” or “clear [stream] flows.” I would like to thank and recognize colleague and friend Israel Burshatin for offering this alternative translation in order to nuance a deeper symbolic meaning of Clara’s name and role in the poem.

14. See Hall, *Things of Darkness* 107–16, for an astute reading of how the Song of Songs imagery plays out in Renaissance English poetry.

15. Over the past decade Hispanists and Latin Americanists alike (see Trueblood; Fr-Molinero, *La imagen de los negros*; Branche; Beusterien, *An Eye on Race*) have taken issue with Góngora’s “Zambambú” song for various reasons. They have problematized the ways in which the passage—along with various imitations of it by other Baroque poets—usurps Africanized Castilian through its infantilizing and picturesque misappropriation of black people’s speech acts. As a white author who creates black voices, Góngora undoubtedly exoticizes and fetishizes the word “Zambambú” as a *verbal(ized)* form of Blackness. The poets’ handling of “Zambambú” can also be read through bell hooks’s critical paradigm of “eating the other,” where Western artists, thinkers, and writers desire and consume the so-called primitive Other.

16. For additional historical information about black African slaves in the royal courts of late Medieval and Renaissance Spain, see Silleras-Fernández.

17. For more information on dogs and the impact animal studies has had on early modern Hispanic studies, see Beusterien, *Canines in Cervantes and Velázquez*.

18. The complete text reads: “Mas hablando de los esclavos de ahora, o son Turcos, o Beberiscos, o Negros; los dos primeros géneros suelen salir infieles, mal intencionados, ladrones, borrachos, llenos de mil sensualidades y cometedores de mil delitos. Andan de continuo maquinando contra la vida de sus señores; su servicio es sospechoso, lleno de peligro, y así, digno de evitarse. Los negros son de mejor naturaleza, más fáciles de llevar, y enseñados, de mucho provecho. Muéstranse más leales y de más amor para con sus dueños” (Suárez de Figueroa 624–25).

19. Sor Juana’s religious *villancicos* reach us from the city of Mexico, heart of the autocratic and theocratic vicereignty of New Spain. Many cathedrals (including Mexico City, Oaxaca, and Puebla) commissioned her works for use during the celebration of matins, following a mode of religious ritual whose practice had developed in Spain and was widespread by the second half of the seventeenth century in New Spain. These poems offer splendid examples of the intelligence and sympathy with which Sor Juana contributes to the spiritual life of her multiracial community. A body of poetry directed to and written for the public, she composed a total of six *villancicos* showcasing African voices, whose lyrics were prepared for the Catholic feasts of the Nativity, the Assumption, and the Immaculate Conception, as well as those dedicated to the saint day of Catherine of Alexandria. On the other side of the Atlantic in Spain, a large collection of *villancicos* from Granada referred to as “La Capilla Real de su Magestad, de esta Ciudad de Granada, en los Solemnes Maytines del Santo Nacimiento de Nuestro Señor Jesu Christo,” were composed by Don Alonso de Blas y Sandoval in 1694 four years after those of Sor Juana. De Blas y Sandoval composed three *villancicos* using *habla de negros* speech: “Aquellos negros que dieron” (1694), “¿Qué gente, plima, qué gente?” (1696), and “Azí, Flazquiya” (1701). Some of the poems from the “Capilla Real” volume were written anonymously with no specific date of publication, while

others were composed throughout the eighteenth century by Esteban Redondo ("Apalte la gente blanca" [1783] and "Los negrillos esta noche") and Antonio Navarro ("Los narcisos de Guinea" [1717]).

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