

GENDER AND THE DIVINE IN CERNUDA'S LATER POETRY

IN this article, I use ideas developed by the French feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray in order to examine and stimulate discussion of the representation of masculinity and femininity in Cernuda's last four books of poetry. A secondary aim of this paper is to suggest indirectly that gender is central to other, apparently ungendered issues, such as aesthetics and time, which have been the subject of much debate among Cernuda's critics. To develop my argument, I focus in particular on Irigaray's ideas concerning the role of the divine in the establishment and development of gender identity. Cernuda's last four books of poetry offer particularly fertile ground for the analysis of the relationship between femininity and the divine because female divinities appear in them more frequently than in any of his other books of poetry. My study initially focusses on poems in which the Christian God occupies an important place and examines the relation between those poems' portrayals of God and gender identity. In the second section, I draw out the similarities between those poems' representation of God and gender and that of poems which focus on goddesses from Greek mythology- In the final section, I examine some poems which offer more dynamic representations of gender in as much as they provide evidence of a greater respect for sexual difference on the part of their speaker and/or the power of the maternal-feminine to disrupt masculinity.

Critical discussions of the divine and identity in Cernuda's poetry have tended to focus, and with good reason, on the question of the figure of the poet. The divine has frequently been seen as playing an essential role in the poet's identity, both as what makes the poet's identity possible and as a horizon towards which the poet aspires. For example, Salvador Jiménez-Fajardo describes the poet as, in part, the "voice of the gods" (87) while Derek Harris terms the poet a "mediator between man and the daemonic power" (97) and, therefore, an "interpreter of the divine law" (98). In contrast, for Luis Antonio de Villena, it is the loss of divinity that characterizes the poet's identity: the poet is "caído de su celeste origen" (53), an "ángel caído" (54), a description that posits a parallel between the devil and the poet that Philip W. Silver discusses at length in *De la mano de Cernuda* (101-21). Silver has also argued that the point of view Cernuda seeks in his poetry, from which the phenomenal world is viewed as eternal and the poet inhabits the passing moment without being conscious of its passing, is analogous to that of God (*De la mano* 52). Finally, these two views of the divine as both origin and horizon are found in the work of Alexander Coleman for whom the poet is a "mediator [...] between the world of things and the soul" (14) who has a "sense of divine power" or "omnipotence" (17) and assumes a "divine perspective" (18).

Within Cernuda criticism, the question of gender has never been addressed in a direct and sustained fashion. In general, gender has appeared sporadically and very much in passing in critics' discussions of nature. For example, Cole-

man distinguishes between the "two parts of the world", "things" (natural objects) and "beings" (humans) (51). However, later in his argument, he describes nature as a being when he states that, in transcending what he is by manipulating nature, the poet "extends his whole being into another" (63). Although this slippage by itself does not reveal the gender of the being that is equated with nature, Coleman's comments elsewhere suggest that that being is maternal. For example, he writes that, when he transcends his temporal existence, Cernuda is carried back into a "timeless world of childlike innocence" (62), that Cernuda strives for "rebirth" (62), and that Cernuda's imagination "feeds on the particulars of the world" (44; emphasis added). Other critics have also associated nature with the maternal-feminine. For instance, Octavio Paz describes the divinity that the poet finds in nature as "madre de dioses y mitos" (156) while Silver refers to the "timeless embrace of maternal nature" ("*Et in Arcadia Ego*" 50). Metaphors relating to the maternal-feminine are also found in critics' discussions of Cernuda's relation to Spain. For example, Luis Maristany glosses his argument that the idea of Andalusia is contaminated by that of Spain with the comment that, "la imagen materna lleva aparejada la *imago* opuesta, la 'madrastro'" (44) while José Luis Cano compares Cernuda's relation to Spain with a male lover's "trágico desengaño" with his female beloved (253). In the same vein, Patricia Angélica Pinto has analyzed the portrayal of natural Spain in Cernuda's work in terms of the Jungian Earth-Mother archetype, a subdivision of the Feminine (126-81).

In her essay "Divine Women", Irigaray argues that woman can only become a subject in her own right if she posits her own God.¹ In doing so, Irigaray develops Feuerbach's argument in *The Essence of Christianity* that the human species can only exist if it posits a God (61, footnote 3). In contrast to Feuerbach, Irigaray rejects the concept of a gender-neutral humanity and insists that men and women have their own, different sexuate essences or gender identities. For Irigaray, in order to live or to become, it is necessary to will and, in order to will, one must have a goal ("Divine Women" 61). In Irigaray's opinion, the "most valuable" goal is to preserve and develop life, that is, to "go on *becoming*, infinitely" ("Divine Women" 61). In order to achieve this goal of infinite becoming in the context of sexual difference, that is, in order for each sex to develop an autonomous and living gender identity, each sex must have a "sexuate essence" as its "*horizon*" ("Divine Women" 61), as both an "opening onto a beyond" and a "*limit* that the other may or may not penetrate" ("Sexual Difference" 17). In order to establish one's sexuate essence, it is necessary to "orient [one's] finiteness by reference to infinity" ("Divine Women" 61). Such orientation implicitly involves performing two moves: firstly, adjusting one's bodily specificity or finiteness to known facts and, secondly, defining an infinite form of one's bodily specificity. It is in this second move that the divine comes into play since, for Irigaray, the divine guarantees the infinite for the sexed subject, male or female ("Divine Women" 61). Rather than being transcendental and static, however, this guarantee of the infinite, this sexed God, should be an infinite which "resides within us and among us, the god in us, the Other for us,

¹ For other discussions of the divine in Irigaray's work, see Elizabeth Grosz (14083); and Margaret Whitford (47-48 and 140-47).

becoming with and in us" ("Divine Women" 63) and should not be a "fixed objective, [...] a One postulated to be immutable" ("Divine Women" 67). From this it is clear that, for Irigaray, neither men's nor women's sexuate essence or gender identity should be understood as eternal but rather as constantly developing.²

The recognition that the human race is divided into two genders is one effect of orientating one's finiteness ("Divine Women" 61). However, Irigaray argues, men created the Christian God in order to avoid their gender-specificity:

To avoid that finiteness, man has sought out a unique *male* God. God has been created out of man's gender. He scarcely sets limits within Himself and between Himself: He is father, son, spirit. Man has not allowed himself to be defined by another gender: the female. His unique God is assumed to correspond to the human race (*genre humain*), which [...] is not neuter or neutral from the point of view of the difference of the sexes. ("Divine Women" 61-62)

As this passage states, men's creation of a falsely universal God has led to them avoiding their relation to their own bodily specificity and denying humanity's division into two genders. As a result, the Christian divinity fails to acknowledge the specificity of both men and women's identities. However, as will become apparent, the consequences of this failure — by both the Christian and the non-Christian divine in Cernuda's last four books of poetry — are more severe for women than for men.

According to Irigaray, the female gender consists of two dimensions — mother and lover — both of which must be accommodated and united within woman's God ("Divine Women" 63). Only if both these dimensions of women's identity are acknowledged and developed can men conceive their own finiteness or gender identity. Over the last two thousand years, Irigaray argues, the development of women's identity has been "paralyze [d]" by the absence of a female God or trinity (mother-daughter-spirit) ("Divine Women" 62). This absence has left women with no god of their own to become, with no representation of the freedom and autonomy possible through their gender ("Divine Women" 62). In addition, it has meant that there has been no possibility of divinity being shared between mother and daughter, that the birth of a daughter could not represent the incarnation of a goddess. In contrast, the only way for women to become divine has been by assisting in the incarnation of the God of men by giving birth to the son of God ("Divine Women" 62).

Cernuda's poem "Águila y rosa" (441-45) focuses on the experiences of Philip II in England and makes clear, in its portrait of him and Mary Tudor, the different role that the Christian God plays in male and female identity. For Philip II, being King of England generates a conflict between his true iden-

² For discussions of essence in Irigaray's work, see Diana Fuss (55-72) and Whitford (135-40).

I am grateful to Angel María Yanguas Cernuda for permission to reproduce extracts from Cernuda's work. For other readings of 'Águila y rosa', see Silver, 'Et in Arcadia Ego' (200-01); Jenaro Talens (133 and 309-10); and Jiménez-Fajardo (116).

tity (which is linked with Spain) and his destiny or sense of duty to Charles V's "codicia de coronas" (3). This conflict is clearly described in the third stanza:

Dura tarea es, y fastidiosa, la del poder, caído
 En sus manos tan mozas todavía, y sin costumbre
 De la tierra y la gente, que acaso no le quieran y recelen, Pero
 sobre la cual debe reinar, bajo la cual debe doblegarse,
 Postergando el ser propio y sus modos de España. (11-15)

Lines fifty-one to seventy expand on the subordination of Philip II's "ser propio" (15) to the demands of life at the English court. However, at times, cracks appear in the King's façade which reveal the central place that Christianity occupies in his identity:

Cuán bien lo disimula su aburrimiento. Habla, bebe, juega.
 Domesticado creen al tan soberbio mozo. Mas sabe el sutil modo
 De servir cuando manda, de exaltarse cuando así se humilla, Y de
 su entraña a veces vienen dichos preñados de futuro: "Prefiero no
 reinar, a reinar sobre heréticos". (56-60)

A little later in the poem, Philip II's position as the "monarca católico" of a "pueblo relapso" (78) – his inability to bring his English subjects under the wing of Catholicism – is described as one element of his alienation from "cuanto es suyo" (76) while his frustration with this position and need for God find displaced expression in the soldier's song that he hears: "Sácame de aquí, ay, Dios de mi tierra" (80). Finally, Philip II returns to Castile because he can no longer bear the alienation from his true identity, including his desire to be an effective Catholic monarch (81-90), entailed by his dutiful allegiance to Charles V's wish that he be King of England. On returning to Castile, it remains for Philip II to:

[H]acer que el mundo escuche y siga
 La pauta de la fe. Pudo mover los hombres,
 Hasta donde terminan los designios humanos
 Y empiezan los divinos. Ahí su voluntad descansa.
 Con ese acatamiento reina y muere y vive. (96-100)

According to the narrator in these lines, Philip II was able to make others live in accordance with God's designs and, as a result of respecting the boundary between the so-called human and the divine, was rewarded with eternal life. There is a similarity between this description of Philip II and that of Cortes in "Quetzalcóatl" (350-54).⁴ According to the speaker in "Quetzalcóatl", Cortes was, at least during the conquest of Mexico, an obedient servant of the Christian God, "un hombre / Tal manda Dios" (36-37). The speaker also states that:

⁴ For other readings of this poem, see Silver, "Et in Arcadia Ego" (38 and 197); Coleman (116-21); Harris (156 and 159); Jiménez-Fajardo (85-87); and Stephen Summerhill (153-56 and 159-61).

Pero no es rey quien nace, y Cortés lo sabía.
 ¿Por qué lo olvidó luego, emulando con duques
 En la corte lejana, él, cuyos pies se hicieron
 Para besarlos príncipes y reyes?
 Cuando él se abandonó también Dios le abandona. (97-101)

As this quotation makes clear, as long as Cortes's identity was based on his respect for the divine-human distinction, it was guaranteed by God. Indeed, just as Philip II won the divine attribute of eternity so, this quotation hints, Cortes too was for a time all but a god (99-100).

The first description of Mary Tudor in "Águila y rosa" reads as follows:

Ella en su camarín espera, casi marchito el cuerpo,
 Dentro del cual la adolescencia no vivida tiembla De
 deseo y angustia, las galas suntuosas subrayando El
 empaque monástico, en los labios la difícil sonrisa, En la
 mano esa rosa, esa esperanza del amor tardío.

Si la herencia paterna, densa de infamia y crimen,
 La materna rescata, limpia en el sufrimiento silencioso,
 Tras los años de escarnio, su Dios quizá le debe
 Un pedazo de dicha, algo que alivie el dejo amargo
 De la vida, aunque sea ahora, cuando la mocedad se ha ido. (26-35)

These lines set the terms in which Mary Tudor's relation to God will be enacted in the remainder of the poem. God is not an enabling horizon for Mary Tudor's identity but rather an unpredictable and mean-spirited exchange partner. To all intents and purposes, Mary Tudor lives in a state of dereliction, a term which describes the "state of being abandoned by God" (Whitford 77). The conditional clause (31-32) and the adverb "quizá" (33) indicate that nothing is certain for Mary Tudor in her relation to God: she has no guarantee that her years of suffering have not been, in fact, a "denial of the divine" ("Divine Women" 67) rather than, as she now hopes, an extended prelude to her salvation. The inappropriateness of the Christian God to the Queen's identity as a woman is also suggested by the reduction of her body's temporality to a process of increasing decay and loss (her body is "casi marchito" (26) and her "mocedad" gone (35)), a process which, according to Irigaray, does not adequately represent the economy of female sexuality ("A Chance for Life" 200; "How Old Are You?" 113-17).

At the same time, lines twenty-six to thirty-five also suggest that the Queen's relation to God may be about to undergo a change for the better through the fulfillment of her hope to love and to be loved, her "esperanza del amor tardío" (30).⁵ This possibility is nourished in the next three stanzas by the propitious description of the sky (38-39), the comparison between the arrival of

⁵ Mary Tudor's hope for love is echoed in Manona's impatience with a God who tests his creatures' emotions by depriving them of their loved ones ("Hablando a Manona", 540-42; 1-25). Manona's impatience also represents her desire for a new kind of God, one more generous and less punitive than the one the poem describes. For other readings of "Hablando a Manona" see Harris (166); and Villena (55).

Philip II and the Annunciation (41-42) and her own hope (40). The tenacity of her hope is underlined in lines forty-six to forty-eight by the contrast between the sky's ominously cloudy appearance on her wedding day (its "ceño nublado", 47) and its continued blueness in her ("azul está en ella", 48). It is important to note, however, that the Queen's salvation from suffering, her receipt from God of "[u]n pedazo de dicha" (34), would coincide with her assumption of woman's classic Christian role, that of being mother to the son. This is first made clear when, referring to the bells and trumpets with which Philip II is welcomed to England, the narrator asks a question which creates a parallel between the son Mary Tudor longs for and Christ: "¿No es la voz del arcángel ese clamor que oye [María], / Como salutación del hijo que ha de encarnar su vientre?" (41-42). The second indication is found in lines seventy-one to seventy-three: "[A]ma y en el hijo confía, / Como aguardó al esposo, aguardándole ahora, / Y al creerle llegado el gozo la hace joven." However, as the poem's next line makes clear, even woman's traditional Christian role is not available to her: "Pero todo fue engaño; rezó y esperó en vano" (74). In the face of the Queen's abandonment by God, the narrator seeks to salvage some comfort or value from the wreckage. Once Philip II has returned to Castile, all that remains for Mary Tudor is to:

[M]orir a solas,
Sin hijo y sin esposo, mirando el cielo bajo
Que pesa como losa anticipada. Pero su vida ha conocido, Si
no la flor, su sombra; entonces no fue estéril,
Y valía la pena de vivirse, como toda esa amargura. (91-95)

For the narrator, as Harris (138) points out, Mary Tudor's life had value because she knew the shadow of love, because, in other words, she almost found salvation through love (in the form of marriage and motherhood), a proximity the narrator considers a form of spiritual fertility (94). Such a form of salvation would, however, have reinforced the paralysis of her identity suggested earlier by God's mean-spiritedness and unpredictability.

"Las ruinas" (323-26) offers an important definition of the Christian God as well as a glimpse on to life after the death of God.⁶ According to the speaker, the Christian God does not really exist but is, rather, merely an inverted sign of humans' fear and powerlessness, a creation of human language and emotion: "[E]res [Dios] tan sólo el nombre / Que da el hombre a su miedo y su impotencia [...]" (51-52). In keeping with this, a little later in the poem, the speaker classifies God as one of the "eternos dioses sordos" that are nourished by humans' prayers and annihilated by their forgetfulness (64-65). By attributing omnipotence to God, humans define omnipotence as the horizon of their identity. However, such a definition of the horizon of human identity testifies to that horizon's false universality: according to Irigaray, the divine is represented as absolute master because relations between the sexes diminish or

⁶ For other readings of this poem, see Silver, "Et in Arcadia Ego" (39-40 and 165-66); Harris (84-85, 103, 151, 154, and 155); Kevin J. Bruton (390-91); and Hilda Pato (67-77).

destroy the maternal-feminine and do not allow women their own life as subjects ("Sexual Difference", 10).

Rejecting the Christian God, the speaker states that the desire to instill eternity in the transient will be the basis of his life without God:

Yo no te envidio, Dios; déjame a solas Con
mis obras humanas que no duran: El
afán de llenar lo que es efímero
De eternidad, vale tu omnipotencia. (59-62)

However, these lines suggest that the speaker cannot entirely live without God because he needs God's cooperation to do so (59-60). In the same vein, the speaker's "afán de llenar lo que es efímero / De eternidad" (61-62) is synonymous with the "sed de eternidad" which he has previously described as instilled in men by God: "Oh Dios. Tú que nos has hecho / Para morir, ¿por qué nos infundiste / La sed de eternidad, que hace al poeta?" (45-47). Furthermore, the speaker identifies with God and sets himself up as His earthly equivalent by claiming that his "sed de eternidad" (47) is of the same value as God's omnipotence (61-62).⁷ Finally, the speaker defines life and his own actions after God's death largely in terms of impermanence and death (57-60 and 66-67).⁸ However, even here, where the speaker's rejection of God appears most complete, the influence of the divine is still evident since, according to the speaker himself, God made humans "[piara morir" (45-46). This representation of God echoes the image of God as "sheer oblivion and loss, [...] a crumbling away of existence" (67) which Irigaray rejects in "Divine Women" as an obstacle to the individual and collective fulfillment of gender identity.⁹ The speaker's emphasis on the impermanence of human life is, therefore, further evidence of his continuing loyalty to his identity as the creation of a falsely universal God. In conclusion, "Las ruinas" reveals the omnipresence and false universality of the Christian God, characteristics which pose insuperable obstacles to the successful realization of male and female gender identity.

Despite the inhibiting influence that the Christian God has on the development of gender identity, Cernuda's later poetry shows that switching to other divinities does not automatically produce more favourable results. Indeed, the characteristics of the Christian God in "Las ruinas" – omnipotence and

⁷ Armando López Castro also highlights the mirroring of God in Man when he writes that "lo que de modo originario vale para los Inmortales, llenar el instante de eternidad, eso mismo vale, como imitación, para el poeta en tanto que hombre" (86). For her part, Pato argues that the poet's desire to instill eternity in the ephemeral is superior to God's omnipotence (70) since his dialogue with God concludes with "sentencias que invierten de manera terminante y sucinta los valores tradicionalmente asignados [...]" (70).

⁸ This is also the case in "Mutabilidad" (344) in which "alma, deseo [y] hermosura" (7) do not last because they are the "galas de las bodas / Eternas con la muerte" (8-9). For other readings of "Mutabilidad", see Harris (151); Ricardo Molina (106); and M5 Victoria Utrera (128 and 132).

⁹ Similarly, in "Hablando a Manona", God is primarily a source of deprivation (He deprives His creatures of others' love, a love which they can only experience again, if at all, after death).

destructiveness – are echoed in the description of the Greek mythological monster the Chimaera in the poem "Desolación de la Quimera" (527-30).¹⁰ For example, the Chimaera describes its divine "afán" (35) as one which "se concreta en ver rendido al hombre / Temeroso ante mí" (35-36) and which used to beat humans into submission like animals (37-38). Furthermore, the Chimaera states that she rewarded some of her victims with "la aridez, la ruina y la muerte" (59-60) and drove others mad with their hopes and dreams (66-68). Since she either destroyed the identity of those who turned to her or offered them a future of madness (67), it is clear that the Chimaera was a profoundly inadequate horizon of identity.

That the Chimaera was primarily a horizon for male identity is made clear by three elements of her monologue. Firstly, the poets who currently heed the Chimaera are, among other things, bald (46). Secondly, the Chimaera contrasts a past in which "el hombre" served her and was tempted by her secrets (41-42) with a present in which "no muchos" seek out her secret (49) because "en la mujer encuentran su personal triste Quimera" (50). That these individuals who find their "personal Quimera" in women are men is suggested by the description of their relationship with women as reproductive: in lines fifty-one to fifty-three, the Chimaera expresses her repulsion at being sought out by people who have changed their child's nappies or wiped a child's nose. Thirdly, the Chimaera exemplifies her past destructiveness by saying that, if a prudent man sought her out, she would strangle him (69-70).

The appropriation by men of a female goddess, the Chimaera, has disastrous consequences not only, as I have shown, for their own gender identity but also for that of women. The Chimaera's detrimental effect on women is suggested by three elements in particular. First, the Chimaera's description of the woman-mother as man's "personal triste Quimera" (50) transfers the goddess's attributes onto women who, as a result, are portrayed as human beings containing a potential for monstrosity and destructiveness. Secondly, the Chimaera refers to her "hermana" (30), the Sphinx, as her "rival" (30), that is, as competing for the attention of the same men. Such rivalry, according to Irigaray, is caused by women's lack of an identity as women, which forces them to compete for the place of the mother in order to be loved by men ("Love of Same" 102). Such rivalry among women confirms their lack of a female trinity (in this poem, the Chimaera's failure to guarantee their gender) since, without a God, women are left in a state in which sharing among themselves implies "fusion-confusion, division, and dislocation within themselves, among themselves" ("Divine Women" 62). Finally, the Chimaera's destructiveness and the composite nature of her body (half-animal, half-woman, 13-16) both indicate that she does not guarantee a specifically female identity. According to Irigaray, woman acts as an "agent of destruction and annihilation" when she lacks an other of her own that she can become ("Divine Women" 64) and is divided between the human and the inhuman because she lacks a goddess who can "open up the perspective in which [her] flesh can be transfigured" ("Divine Women" 64).

¹⁰For other readings of this poem, see Rafael Argullol (30); Jiménez-Fajardo (143); and Carlos Ruiz Silva (128 and 178-80).

The siren of the short poem "Las sirenas" (494-95) is a further example of a composite female monster from Greek mythology that is of particular significance to men and fails to guarantee an adequate identity for men and women. " That the Chimaera and the siren embody the same horizon of identity is suggested by the various similarities between their attributes and effects: both creatures sing (76 and 1, 2, 6, 9, 12, 16 and 17 respectively); their songs are attractive (79 and 12 respectively); both creatures possess and madden men (61 and 66-67 and 15 respectively); and both are associated with mystery (29-30, 36, 42, 45, and 57 and 1 respectively). Finally, both creatures also bestow destruction on the men who heed them (59-60 and 18 respectively). The destructiveness (for both men and women) of the horizon represented by the siren is made clear in the narrator's statement that "el que una vez las oye [a las sirenas] viudo y desolado queda para siempre" (18): the result of men's relation to the siren is a literal death for women (the men remain "viudo[s]") and a metaphorical death for men (they are "desolado[s]" although still alive).

The association of the Chimaera and the siren with mystery suggests that these figures can also be seen as, in part, examples of "those points of recalcitrance" in patriarchal representations of women that "indicate points of `repression' and sites of [the] symptomatic eruption of femininity" (Grosz 109). A further instance of femininity's disruption of patriarchal masculinity is found in "Quetzalcóatl" where the speaker gives a retrospective account of his experiences as a member of the army with which Cortes defeated the Aztecs during the Spanish invasion of Mexico. For the speaker, the most significant of these experiences was the "milagro" (3) of seeing the defeated Aztec king Moctezuma. As I will show, the speaker's comments about this supposedly miraculous event are contradictory. In keeping with this contradictoriness, the belief in something as a miracle is, according to Irigaray, often a "result of weakness or narrowness in the field of conception", a field which is traditionally the "privilege of the masculine" ("The Envelope" 92). The contradiction in the speaker's account of his vision of Moctezuma is a conceptual weakness that is inseparable from the return of the maternal-feminine into his relation to the divine and his gender identity.

In the poem's opening lines, the speaker emphatically states that: "Yo estaba allí, mas no me preguntéis / De dónde o cómo vino [Moctezuma], sabed sólo / Que estuve yo también cuando el milagro" (1-3). However, later in the poem, the speaker tells his audience both where Moctezuma came from ("[de] dónde [...] vino") and how the Aztec ruler approached the conquering Spaniards ("cómo vino"):

[E] n una mañana, por los arcos y puertas
Que abrió la capital vencida ante nosotros,
Onduló como serpiente de bronce y diamante Cortejo
con litera trayendo al rey azteca [...]. (82-85)

¹¹ For other readings of this poem, see Harris (170); Jiménez-Fajardo (14243); and Ruiz Silva (165-67) .

Furthermore, the speaker also describes the state in which Moctezuma surrendered: "Pobre rey Moctezuma, golondrina / Rezagada que sorprende el invierno, / Mojada y aterida el ala ya sin fuerza." (94-96). Accompanying this contradiction is the speaker's experience of the fulfillment of his masculinity: for the speaker, seeing Moctezuma was like seeing God ("Me pareció romperse el velo mismo / De los últimos cielos, desnuda ya la gloria", 86-87). The realization of the speaker's gender identity, therefore, occurs at the same time as a "weakness or narrowness" ("The Envelope", 92) is revealed in his thought by the contradiction in his narrative and the description of the sight of Moctezuma as a miracle. The correlation of this paradoxical simultaneity of masculinity's fulfillment and conceptual failure with the question of maternity is suggested by the echoes of birth in the description of Moctezuma's surrender. Not only does Moctezuma emerge through the "arcos y puertas / Que abrió la capital" (82-83) but also, recalling the waters of the womb, he does so like a wave ("onduló", 84). Furthermore, he is carried forth by slaves (84-85), who take the place of midwives. The speaker's comment on seeing the defeated Aztec ruler – "no es rey quien nace, y Cortés lo sabía." (97) – is further evidence of a connection between Moctezuma's appearance and the maternal-feminine: seeing Moctezuma reminds the speaker of the divine-human distinction and, implicitly, of the dependence of all human existence on the mother. The intrusion of maternity into the speaker's description of Moctezuma's appearance, into his experience of his masculinity's fulfillment, reveals the maternal-feminine to be the disruptive ground of and a symptom of weakness in men's relation to their gender and God.

Our understanding of the role of Greek goddesses in Cernuda's later poetry, however, will remain incomplete if we do not acknowledge that, at times, men's relation to a female deity goes some way towards acknowledging and respecting sexual difference. The poem "Urania" (328-29) describes a statue of Urania standing in a wood of plane trees at the foot of a waterfall and the significance she has for the poem's speaker.¹² The two references to Urania's virginity (7 and 17) suggest that she embodies a specifically female horizon of identity that is not caught within patriarchal relations. According to Irigaray, one of the ways in which women can achieve a human identity is through the legal inscription of virginity as a "component of female identity that cannot [...] in any way be converted into cash by the patriarchal family, state, or religion" ("How Do We Become Civil Women?" 60). Such an inscription of virginity, Irigaray argues, can provide a positive individual and social identity for girls and women which will contest and replace their status as the commodities whose exchange by and among men founds the patriarchal cultural order ("How Do We Become Civil Women?" 61).¹³

¹² For other readings of this poem, see Harris (71); Ruiz Silva (98-99); and Ángel Sahuquillo (115-17). Although the speaker's gender is not grammatically marked, it is not unreasonable to posit a correspondence between the speaker and Cernuda. This poem also raises the question of the relation between male homosexuality and femininity that I examine in my forthcoming article, "Male Homosexual Identities in Cernuda's Later Poetry".

¹³ See also Irigaray's essays "Civil Rights and Responsibilities for the Two Sexes" (73-74) and "Why Define Sexed Rights?" (86-87).

The autonomy of Urania's identity is also signalled by the hardness or irreducibility of the diamond on her forehead (8), by the transcendental position (21-22) she occupies in relation to "el dolor informe de la vida" (23) and by her description as "rosa del silencio" (30). As the "rosa del silencio" (30), Urania flourishes on the other side of the speaker's language: in as much as his language cannot describe her, she marks and reminds us of the limits of his speech. Consequently, we should not confuse Urania's identity with the speaker's description of her statue: the latter is an imperfect portrait of the former which, in fact, exceeds the speaker's language. The poem's status as a representation of Urania is underlined by the fact that Urania moves the speaker to use signs: she is the "[r]adiante inspiradora de *los números*" (18; emphasis added). Furthermore, she creates beauty without compromising her autonomy: she remains "[d]el orden bello *virgen creadora*" (17; emphasis added). Beauty and, by implication, the poem do not impinge on her gender identity, which transcends its creations. In the poem's final stanza, therefore, when the speaker anticipates that he will relate to himself differently as a result of seeking the shelter of Urania's love (28-29), his new relation is implicitly grounded in his recognition of sexual difference.

In "*Ninfa y pastor, por Ticiano*" (498-99), the speaker's description of the nymph as "desnuda" (17 and 29) and his reference to her "carnal hermosura" (19) make clear that he is describing a woman's body.¹⁴ Our attention is focussed on the nymph's body by the importance the speaker attributes to it: for him, it is the painting's "centro" (23) and "razón" (24). This focus on and privileging of the divine female-body is transformed into respect by the emphasis the speaker places on the "ternura" (31) and "amor" (33) with which he claims Titian painted the nymph's body.

However, in both "Urania" and "*Ninfa y pastor, por Ticiano*", an opposing current of indifference to the particularity of gender identity also circulates around the divine female body. Contradicting the speaker's recognition of Urania's autonomous gender identity, there is also a universalizing thread to "Urania" which is indicated by two factors: the concealment of the gender of the individuals who benefit from her influence – they are simply referred to as "las almas" (19) – and the reference to Urania restoring silence over "el mundo" (13). These aspects of the poem suggest that men and women have the same relation to Urania, even though the speaker has made it clear that Urania cannot be represented in his (i.e. men's) language. In "*Ninfa y pastor, por Ticiano*", the speaker describes the nymph's body in order to fulfil the wish of the "tú" to represent the implicitly ungendered "forma humana" (13). Whereas, in "Urania", the poem's status as a representation of the goddess was a factor in its acknowledgement of sexual difference, in "*Ninfa y pastor, por Ticiano*", the speaker's implicit recognition of the artifice of his representation of the nymph – his statement that "la forma humana" (13) will be represented in the contradictory medium of silent speech ("hablando silencioso" 14) – is part of a universalizing project.¹⁵ Furthermore, the reference to the nymph's

¹⁴ For other readings of this poem, see Harris (166-67 and 170); Jose Olivio Jiménez (330 and 334); Jiménez-Fajardo (140-41); and Ruiz Silva (173). The painting is reproduced as plate #182 in Erwin Panofsky's *Problems in Titian*.

¹⁵ This indifference to gender identity is echoed in the secondary literature. For example, Ruiz Silva calls the poem a homage to the implicitly ungendered "hermosura

body as the painting's "gozo" (24) posits the divine female body as a source of pleasure for the male painter and viewer rather than for herself and, as a result, reduces her identity to that of a commodity exchanged among men. The painting, therefore, alienates the nymph from her body rather than, as López Castro has argued (97), providing it with its own materiality. The woman-mother is also reduced to a commodity in "Las islas" (427-30) where she is both represented as a prostitute for a male client (34-60) and described with the same adjectives as a piece of silk that the male speaker saw for sale (810 and 50).¹⁶ In keeping with this, her client subordinates her pleasure to his (56-57) and, when he leaves, takes with him the bracelet (58-60) that had symbolized her pleasure (54-55). Finally, as in "Desolación de la Quimera", the woman-mother in "*Ninfa y pastor, por Ticiano*" is identified with animality given that Titian is said to have instilled "candor animal" (28) in the nymph's body.

Just as in "Quetzalcóatl" the maternal-feminine was a symptom of a conceptual weakness in men's relation to their gender and divine, so the presence of contradictory currents around the divine female body in these poems is evidence of the speaker's inability fully to take into consideration his bodily specificity: it is a precondition of his recognition and representation of autonomous female subjectivity that he have some awareness of the fulfillment of his own gender. That this precondition has not been met in "*Ninfa y pastor, por Ticiano*" is shown by the speaker's contradictory representation of Titian's and, by extension, the "tú"'s identity in terms of both universality and specificity. In the poem's last three lines, the speaker refers to Titian's "fervor humano" (40) despite describing it as still as innocent as it had been "en *el mozo / Destinado a ser hombre sólo y para siempre*" (41-42; emphasis added). The "tú"'s identity is also subject to this contradiction since, like Titian, the "tú" is one of those people who were born "para ser hombres" (18).

The relation between the divine and gender in Cernuda's later poetry is complex and varied. The relation's variety is evident in the range of situations described in the poems analyzed, situations which include the denial of women's gender identity, the partial fulfillment of men's and a faltering respect for sexual difference. Alongside the variety of the divine-gender relation is its complexity. On the one hand, the maternal-feminine retains the power to disrupt patriarchal masculinity while, on the other, respect for and indifference to sexual difference can be found side by side. In the light of this variety and complexity, it would be misleading to claim that Cernuda's later poetry offered a one-dimensional view of the gender-divine relation. What we find is not a wholly oppressive representation of masculinity nor a fully realized respect for female subjectivity but, rather, a conflictful and unstable relation between the two.

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física" (173) while, according to Olivio Jiménez, the speaker exalts Titian's "voluntad de descubrir y rescatar lo humano esencial" (334) and Jiménez-Fajardo claims that Titian's fervour "realize[s] in him [Titian] a full humanity" (140).

¹⁶For other readings of this poem, see Harris (135) and Summerhill (153-54).

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