

EKPHRASTIC MORAL MIRRORS IN NEW SPAIN: SOR JUANA'S *NEPTUNO ALEGÓRICO* AND SIGÜENZA'S *THEATRO DE VIRTUDES POLÍTICAS*

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The goal of this paper is to argue that the *Neptuno Alegórico* and the *Theatro de Virtudes Políticas*, which were composed in 1680 by the Novohispanic philosophers Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora to accompany respectively two arches erected to celebrate the entry of the Spanish viceroy to Mexico City, are notable not only as examples of panegyric Baroque literature but also as philosophical texts aimed at moral exhortation. To be specific, I argue that the *Neptuno* and the *Theatro* belong to a hybrid genre that I label ekphrastic moral mirrors. Ekphrastic moral mirrors, which make up a subset of the traditional *specula principum*, are characterized by offering moral exhortation and political advice to a prince indirectly, by means of an elaborate ekphrasis of a work of art (which, in the case of the *Neptuno* and the *Theatro*, were the two arches that they were respectively paired with). I also argue that the use of ekphrasis in a public setting enables the creation of a composite audience made up by various stakeholders with different interests that is intended to reflect and reinforce the creation of a unified political entity.

Keywords: Ekphrasis; Moral exhortation; Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz; *Neptuno Alegórico*; Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora; *Theatro de Virtudes Políticas*

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1. Introduction

On September 19, 1680, Tomás de la Cerda y Aragón arrived at Veracruz as he had been designated viceroy of New Spain. After traveling the route followed by Hernán Cortés, as it was customary, Tomás de la Cerda y Aragón was officially inaugurated in Mexico City on November 30, 1680. In accordance with an imperial tradition where the arrival of a ruler was hailed with lavish festivities and displays of fealty, the *cabildo* and the Metropolitan Church commissioned Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, the two most brilliant Novohispanic authors of that period, to devise two temporary triumphal arches.¹ The façades of both arches were decorated with complex allegorical paintings, the meanings of which were difficult to understand for the audience present at the viceroy's enthronement.² Accordingly, both authors penned extended ekphrases—which I define, following Luis Castellví Laukamp (2020: 10), as ‘a poetic description, which aims at a vivid evocation in the mind’s eye’—that carefully depicted each arch. Using these texts, some scholars have offered tentative sketches of how the arches looked. For instance, Georgina Sabat de Rivers (1988: 261) presents in **Figure 1** a depiction of the arch that was commissioned to Sor Juana based on her description:

Each arch (and the ekphrastic text associated with it) had a different theme. Sigüenza's arch and his *Theatro de Virtudes Políticas* were centered on Aztec history, presenting the viceroy as the heir of a long line of Aztec emperors whose portraits hung on the arch's façade. Citing Suetonius, Sigüenza chose this theme because, for him (1984: 174), ‘it is clear that if the intention is to provide exemplars to be imitated, it was an insult to the fatherland for Romans to borrow foreign heroes to exercise the virtues.’³ In contrast, Sor Juana's arch and her *Neptuno*

1. Since both arches were built using wood, cardboard, and paper, they were deliberately ephemeral as they were created just for the official enthronement ceremony. Some scholars view their ephemerality as a symbol of the transient nature of human creations and of life, which was a central motif in the Baroque period. For instance, Gonzalo Celorio (1997: 36) writes: ‘Quizá nada refleje mejor la ciudad barroca, ampulosa y efímera, que los arcos triunfales, destinados a dar la bienvenida a virreyes y arzobispos, en cuya erección, igualmente sometida a certamen, la concepción poética precede a la arquitectura.’ I thank a reviewer for pressing me to highlight the ephemeral nature of the arches.

2. Some scholars have noted that the abstruseness and the complexity of the arches are likely deliberate since both Sigüenza and Sor Juana exploited those features to conceal certain intentions. For instance, in the case of Sor Juana, Verónica Grossi (2004: 186) makes the following hypothesis: ‘Me pregunto si esta alegoría encomiástica dirigida a las autoridades virreinales y españolas (eclesiásticas y civiles) no esconde a su vez otros sentidos dirigidos a un público secreto, impensado por los espectadores y lectores del *Neptuno Alegórico*. Recordemos que la escritura alegórica muchas veces esconde significados subversivos de los ojos vigilantes del poder.’

3. In the original: ‘Y claro está que si era el intento proponer para la imitación ejemplares, era agraviar a su patria mendigar extranjeros héroes de quienes aprendiesen los romanos a ejercitar las virtudes (...)’.

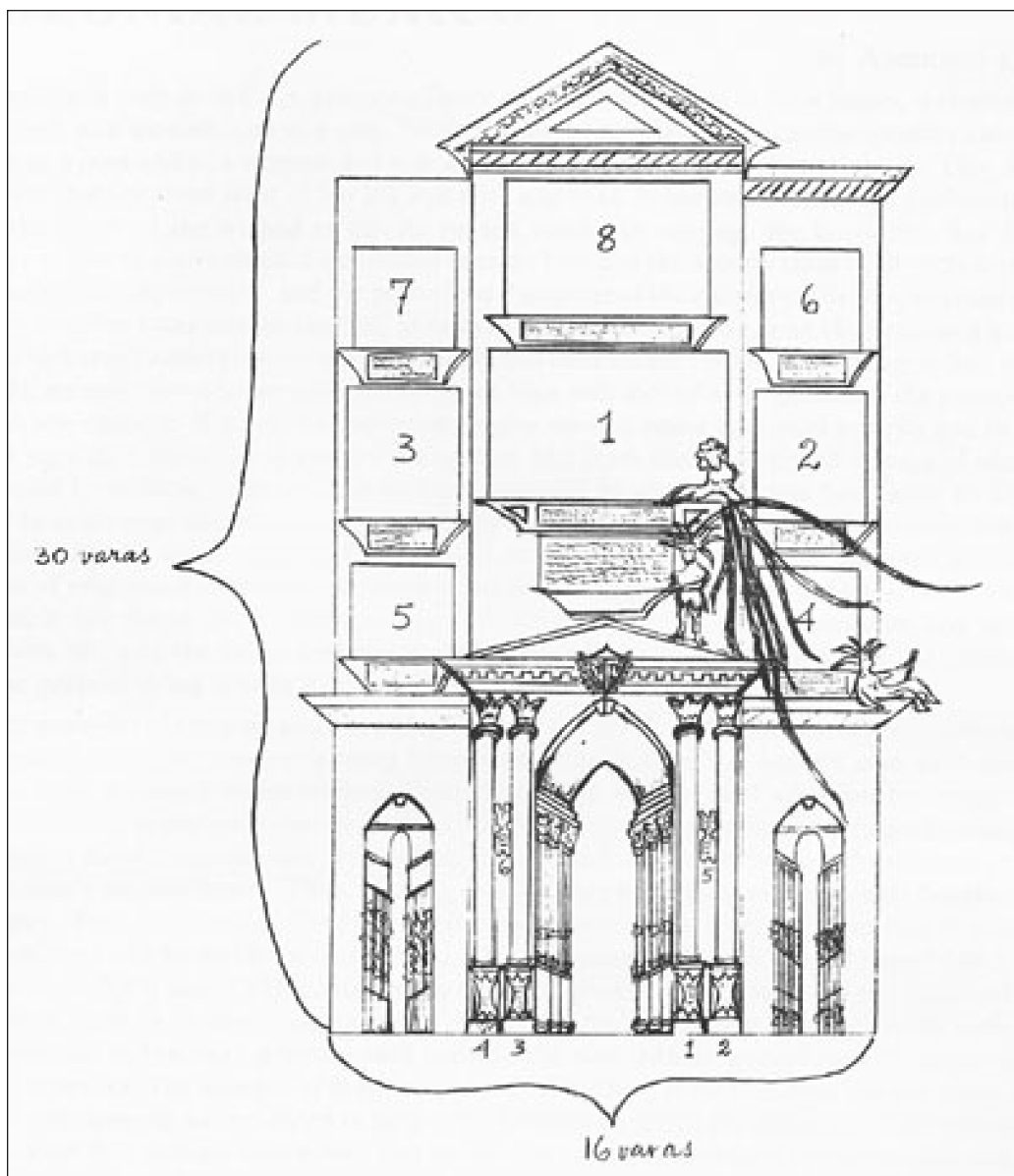


Figure 1 Sketch of an illustration of Sor Juana's triumphal arch: Neptuno Alegórico.

Alegórico were centered around Roman mythology, presenting the viceroy and his wife as the gods Neptune and Amphitrite. Sor Juana selected this theme because, in her view (1957: 359), 'it was necessary for the discourse to extend into the fabulous to address what it did not encounter among actual entities.'⁴

4. In the original: '(...) y así le fue preciso al discurso dar ensanchas en lo fabuloso a lo que no hallaba en lo ejecutado.'

Though the viceregal couple appreciated both arches and the ekphrastic texts paired with them (particularly, Sor Juana's *Neptuno Alegórico*),⁵ both their commissioned origin and their mundane success elicited criticisms. Specifically, Antonio Núñez de Miranda, who was Sor Juana's confessor, chastised her for devoting efforts to the creation of an *excessively learned* and *ostentatious* piece of entertainment. These criticisms have shaped the contemporary reception of the *Theatro* and the *Neptuno*. Indeed, various scholars maintain that: (i) as both works aim to impress the viceroy with a display of Baroque pomp and erudition, they are tedious and difficult to read (e.g., Pimentel 1890; Paz 1988; Leonard 1929); and that (ii) since both works were commissioned for a social event, they are of primary interest as rhetorical exercises that belong to a culture of 'fiestas palaciegas' (e.g., Parodi 2011). Because of this, the *Theatro* and the *Neptuno* have attracted limited attention since they are viewed as circumstantial pieces.

However, I believe that this characterization is unfortunate since both the *Neptuno* and the *Theatro* contain important philosophical insights articulated in an original fashion. Beyond the appearance of being mere panegyrics, the main thesis I defend is here that the *Theatro* and the *Neptuno* can be read as philosophical works that belong to a hybrid genre that I label *ekphrastic moral mirrors*, which is a subset of the traditional *specula principum*. Traditionally, the *specula principum* is understood as encompassing works where 'someone who presents himself as a philosopher speaks to a king with frankness and instructs him on the principles of good rule, combining general ethical reflections with practical advice,' as Geert Roskam and Stefan Schorn (2018: 9) hold.

What sets apart both the *Theatro* and the *Neptuno* from other mirrors such as Desiderius Erasmus' *Institutio Principis Christiani* or Niccoló Machiavelli's *Il Principe* is that they do not aim to offer advice to a prince directly.⁶ Rather, their primary goal is to offer very elaborate and extended ekphrases of certain virtues and of the arches where they are symbolized.⁷ And, through these ekphrases,

5. Though Sigüenza and Sor Juana had high esteem for each other, their arches were, as Cristina Fernández (1999) indicates, in competition with each other because Sigüenza relied on historical models whereas Sor Juana relied on Roman mythology. Considering this, it is understandable why the viceroy and his wife, who were likely acquainted with classical literature as cultivated Spaniards, preferred Sor Juana's arch to that of Sigüenza since the Aztec emperors that he used as models of virtue were probably unfamiliar to them (I thank a reviewer for pressing me to clarify the relationship between both arches).

6. In fact, though the most common function of many mirrors of princes is to offer moral and political advice to the ruler, some authors have pointed out that various mirrors of princes have other functions. For instance, Schmidt (2022: 503) writes: 'The texts referred to as "mirrors of princes" had multiple aims and uses. These were by no means restricted to the instruction of rulers, but include both veneration and criticism of rulers, the conception of a political theory, the conception of a general pedagogy, instructions on marriage, hygiene and nutrition, definitions of the duties of clergy, and the dissemination of general world knowledge.'

7. This is an important point. The ekphrases that are offered by Sigüenza and Sor Juana bear on two different sorts of objects: the virtues that they want the viceroy to practice and the paintings

both Sigüenza and Sor Juana offer general ethical reflections as well as political advice to the viceroy.⁸ Though this deployment of ethical reflections and political advice within literary texts may seem *prima facie* to create an internal tension, it is important to bear in mind that this tension (or, as I would rather characterize it, hybridity) is not something unique or specific to these two texts, but rather a general and distinctive feature of Latin American literature, which is infused with philosophical content. This has been highlighted by Jesús Aguilar (2010: 393): “a considerable amount of Latin American literature produced within the last two centuries (...) ended up exhibiting political and moral content dealing with issues such as the possibility of a less unjust society, the nature of human rights, the recognition of diversity and pluralism, and the appropriation of marginal traditions.” In addition to Sor Juana’s works, some other prominent examples exemplifying this feature that Aguilar cites are Domingo Sarmiento’s *Facundo* and José Enrique Rodó’s *Ariel*.

A secondary thesis that I defend here is that the use of ekphrasis within the framework of the celebration for the viceroy’s enthronement enables the creation of a composite audience made up of various stakeholders having different, but complementary interests. I also argue that the process of creation of this composite audience is intended to mirror and reinforce the political process wherein the viceroy and his subjects, which are respectively viewed as the soul and the physical body of the body politic, are merged to create a unified political entity.

In section 2, I consider what classical rhetoricians such as Quintilian and Cicero hold about ekphrasis. Specifically, I highlight the assumptions they make about it, and I demonstrate how its deployment is tied to practices of ostension and persuasion by offering some examples of how ekphrasis is used, given its connection with these practices, for moral exhortation. In section 3, I examine how Sigüenza and Sor Juana use ekphrasis adroitly to humble themselves vis-à-vis the viceroy so that they can offer moral exhortation without questioning his superior status. In section 4, I explore how Sigüenza and Sor Juana both deploy ekphrasis to describe the two most important virtues—wisdom for Sor Juana and piety for Sigüenza—in an alluring way to the viceroy to justify their cultivation. In section 5, I investigate how Sor Juana and Sigüenza rely on ekphrasis to describe not just the virtues themselves, but also the paintings where they are symbolized to further impress upon the viceroy the need to cultivate them.

where these virtues are symbolized. This is very likely because they both wanted their moral exhortations to the viceroy to be as full-fledged and as persuasive as possible.

8. Beatriz Colombi (2017: 90) notices the advisory or exhortatory role that Sigüenza and Sor Juana adopt in their respective arches and the corresponding ekphrastic texts: ‘El motivo del *buen consejo* revelado en los emblemas no puede pasar desapercibido. Tanto Sor Juana como Sigüenza y Góngora aluden con insistencia a este tema en sus arcos triunfales, lo que refleja, seguramente, la necesaria advertencia sobre los riesgos de los funcionarios y administradores coloniales movidos por la codicia y los intereses personales.’

In section 6, I show how Sigüenza and Sor Juana employ ekphrasis to create a composite audience made up by various stakeholders (e.g., the viceroy and his Novohispanic subjects) with different but complementary interests. I also show how the creation of a composite audience mirrors and reinforces the creation of a unified political entity. Finally, I offer a brief conclusion in section 7.

2. A brief overview of ekphrasis

Understood as a rhetorical device that consists in offering a lively description of a certain event or object (which may be in certain cases a work of art),⁹ ekphrasis has a very long history in literature that can be traced back at least to Homer, who offers in a well-known passage of book 18 of the *Iliad* one of the earliest examples of ekphrasis when he describes extensively the details wrought by Hephaestus on the shield of Achilles. Following this early example, various Greek and Roman authors used ekphrasis extensively for various purposes. In some cases, ekphrasis aimed to convey to readers some important technical knowledge concerning how artifacts such as catapults or aqueducts were created or assembled so that they could function optimally (e.g., Roby 2016). In other cases, ekphrasis was used to highlight virtuous or vicious character traits so that readers or listeners were made aware of attitudes or behaviors that constituted models to be emulated or pitfalls to be avoided, as it can be appreciated in the tradition of skoptic epigrams (e.g., Floridi 2012). And finally, in further cases, ekphrasis was deployed to engage in a sort of cultural politics where the descriptions of certain artworks such as mosaics or sculptures aimed to project dominance by reappropriating the artwork described (if it belonged to a different culture) or by using the artwork described as a way for a group to affirm its cultural superiority vis-à-vis other groups (e.g., Dufallo 2013).

As we can see, ekphrasis has been used for distinct purposes throughout history. This brings forth a question: *how* is ekphrasis able to accomplish these different goals? To answer it, we first must consider two assumptions that underpin the use of ekphrasis for Roman authors. The first is that, when we offer an ekphrasis, its object appears to be an intentional or mental entity since, for Quintilian (2002: 375–377), it is the case that ‘a speech does not adequately fulfill its

9. It is important to notice that, though the contemporary meaning of the concept of ekphrasis is tightly linked to the description of an artwork, the concept for Greek and Roman authors had a much broader application. For instance, Nicolaus the Sophist (2003: 166–7) writes: ‘We compose ekphrases of places, times, festivals, things done: of places, for example, meadows, harbors, pools, and such like; of times, for example, spring, summer; of persons, for example, priests, Thersites, and such; of festivals, like the Panathenaia, the Dyonisia and things done at them (...).’ This is why I adopt here the definition of ekphrasis offered by Castellví Laukamp, which is far more capacious than the ones offered by Leo Spitzer (1955) and James Heffernan (1991).

purpose, or attain the total domination it should have if it goes no further than the ears, and the judge feels that he is merely told the story of the matters he has to decide, without their being brought out to the mind's eye.' The second assumption is that when the object of an ekphrasis is brought before the mind's eye, this is done in such a compelling way that, for Quintilian (2002: 61), 'emotions will ensue just as if we were present at the event itself.' In virtue of these two assumptions, we can see that ekphrasis works by bringing an object before the mind's eye in such a compelling way that the person's mind experiences the same emotional response that it would have if the person witnessed an actual object or event.

Ekphrasis can be used for all the purposes listed above because, first, it creates a 'reality effect,' wherein we almost see what we hear or read and wherein we are emotionally affected by the intentional object in the same way that we would be if we witnessed some corresponding actual object; and, second, because it involves two mechanisms. The first mechanism is a *representational* mechanism that transforms readers or listeners into quasi-direct spectators or witnesses whose attention is drawn to the intentional object placed before their minds' eyes. Because of this, the use of ekphrasis is tied to practices of ostension where its users typically want to show or demonstrate something to readers or listeners. The second mechanism is an *emotion-eliciting* mechanism that makes people experience the same feelings that they would have if they were present in front of a certain actual object or event. Because of this, the use of ekphrasis is tied to suasion practices in which its users seek to charm and move readers or listeners in certain ways by stirring specific feelings.

According to rhetoricians, ekphrasis has these representational and emotive powers and can be effectively used for practices of ostension and persuasion to the extent that it possesses *enargeia* ('clarity' or 'vividness'), in contrast with mere *diegesis* ('narrative').¹⁰ Indeed, for rhetoricians, insofar as the description of an object or an event is vivid, it is able to bring an object or event before the minds' eyes of readers or listeners, and thus transform them into quasi-direct spectators that may be moved insofar as they have some specific interest regarding the object of the ekphrasis. For example, when Cicero uses ekphrasis in *Pro Milone* to describe how his friend Milo undressed in the Senate after he was accused by a fellow senator of concealing a weapon under his garments, Cicero's ekphrasis aims to turn his listeners and readers into quasi-direct spectators of Milo's stripping by bringing a vivid picture of that event to their minds. In turn, this mental picture is meant to elicit the same emotions (i.e., surprise and admiration) that

10. According to Nicolaus the Sophist (2003: 166), 'And we say that ekphrasis (*ekphrasis*) is descriptive speech, bringing what is described clearly (*enargos*) before the eyes. 'Clearly' is added because in this way it most differs from narration (*diegesis*); the latter gives a plain exposition of actions, the former tries to make the hearers into spectators.'

the actual witnesses of the event likely experienced, so that the judges and the audience can be convinced of Milo's innocence and rule in his favor.¹¹

Given that ekphrasis has both representational and emotive capacities, it is not surprising that various Roman authors also deploy it extensively in circumstances different from judicial proceedings that also involve practices of ostension and persuasion—in particular, in cases where they are engaged in moral exhortation. Let me illustrate this with a couple of examples. First, Cicero offers to his readers in the *Tusculan Disputations* a very eloquent ekphrasis of the death of Theramenes, carefully describing his words and demeanor as he was forced to drink hemlock by Critias. In this case, we can appreciate how the ekphrasis used turns Cicero's readers into quasi-direct spectators of Theramenes' death by showing them through a mental picture *how* Theramenes consumed the poison: 'when he had swallowed the poison like a thirsty man, he tossed the remainder out the cup to make a splash' (1927: 115). In addition, the ekphrasis also aims to move Cicero's readers to experience admiration for Theramenes by characterizing him as a 'lofty spirit' (*elato animo*). When we consider the processes of ostension and persuasion that are involved in this Ciceronian use of ekphrasis, we can see that they are geared to offer to Cicero's readers a compelling moral exhortation, which is to 'set the whole meaning of right living in strength and greatness of soul, in disdain and scorn of all human vicissitudes and in the practice of all virtue' (1927: 115).

Secondly, Seneca offers in his *Consolation to Marcia* a consummate example of ekphrasis when he carefully describes the attitudes and actions of both Octavia and Livia after losing their respective sons, Marcellus and Drusus, making clear to her that ekphrasis provides a mental picture since he writes just before introducing the cases he discusses: 'I shall place before your eyes but two examples' (1932: 9). Because of this, Seneca's ekphrasis turns Marcia into a quasi-direct spectator of the mourning processes of Octavia and Livia by painting a detailed and contrasted picture of their respective behaviors: 'Not a single portrait would [Octavia] have of her darling son, not one mention of his name in her hearing. (...) [Livia] never ceased from proclaiming the name of her dear Drusus. She had pictured him everywhere, in private and in public places' (1932: 11–15). The ekphrasis also aims to elicit in Marcia certain specific emotions (i.e., contempt and admiration) that are directed at the different elements of the mental picture Seneca portrays for her, given that Octavia's demeanor is characterized as manifesting a 'slight' (*contumelia*) to her living relatives whereas Livia's mourning is described as 'respectful' (*honestum*). And, just as in the case of the Ciceronian

11. According to Cicero (1931: 81), 'At a crowded meeting of the Senate held recently upon the Capitol a senator ventured to assert that Milo was wearing a dagger; and my client bared his person in that sacred temple, so that since the life of so great a man and citizen afforded no guarantee of his innocence, the fact itself, without a word from him, might speak in his behalf.'

ekphrasis of Theramenes' death, the processes of ostension and persuasion that are fueled by the vividness of the description Seneca paints are geared to offer a moral exhortation to Marcia regarding the proper way to express grief about her own loss: 'That correctness of character and self-restraint that you have maintained all your life, you will exhibit in this matter also; for there is such a thing as moderation even in grieving' (1932: 15).

Thus, in virtue of these examples, we can appreciate that ekphrasis played an important role in moral exhortation during Antiquity since rhetoricians and philosophers assumed that it involved putting an intentional object before the mind's eye and that this intentional object elicited the same type of emotions that an actual corresponding object would elicit. Because of this, ekphrasis was efficiently used to accomplish philosophical work through both practices of ostension and persuasion, wherein a mental picture was conjured for readers or listeners and then subsequently used to sway them in specific ways to practice certain virtues, as Cicero and Seneca do in the previous illustrations.

In addition to providing a great vehicle for moral exhortation given its deep connection with practices of ostension and persuasion, ekphrasis also was used by rhetoricians as way to offer praise to statesmen, as Ernst Curtius (2013: 69) observes, given that these same practices were used in epideictic oratory to paint a picture of a ruler that could be later used to elicit emotions such as love or admiration among his subjects. Because of this, ekphrasis played a major role not only in exhortative moral literature but also in encomiastic or panegyric discourses addressed to kings and princes, particularly during Late Antiquity. Considering that both Sigüenza and Sor Juana were very deeply influenced by classical models of philosophy and rhetoric, it is then not surprising that ekphrasis plays such a prominent role in the *Theatro* and the *Neptuno* since it had been previously used to offer moral exhortation and to praise kings. Keeping this in mind, let me turn to examine how Sigüenza and Sor Juana use ekphrasis to position themselves submissively vis-à-vis the viceroy to provide moral exhortation in a way that does not question his authority.

3. The use of ekphrasis to exhort submissively by humbling oneself

As I stated earlier, the *Theatro* and the *Neptuno* as well as their corresponding arches were commissioned to praise the viceroy and celebrate his accession, symbolizing 'the donation of the city to the viceroy, its new lord,' as María Dolores Bravo Arriaga (1995: 113) asserts. But, in addition to praising the viceroy and stressing the submission of the city to its authority, the *Theatro* and the *Neptuno* also fulfilled, in tandem with their respective arches, both political and moral roles. Within the sphere of politics, they operated as petitionary tools through

which their authors urged the viceroy to undertake various construction projects (e.g., finishing the Metropolitan Cathedral), as various authors (e.g., Checa 1995, Morales Folguera 1991, Maza 1968, and Velázquez de León 1978) have emphasized. Within the moral sphere, they also functioned as moral exhortations to encourage the viceroy to practice the virtues symbolized in the arches, as José Pascual Buxó (2010) contends. However, to properly fulfill these last two roles Sigüenza and Sor Juana had to tread carefully. Indeed, as both were subjects of the viceroy, they had to find ways to offer moral exhortation that did not put into question his superiority. Sigüenza accomplished this by comparing, by means of an ekphrasis, the relation between the human body and its soul with the relation between the body politic and its prince, which is described as a ‘vivifying form:’

To build eternal memorials to the heroism of princes has been more a consequence of the gratitude that their subjects owe them than an endeavor of the veneration that our reverence demands from us. Because just as the inferior part of our being gifts to the superior one, from which its life stems, thus it is necessary that kingdoms and cities, which would not subsist without the vivifying form of their princes, recognize these political souls that preserve their lives.¹² (1984: 169)

Having done this, Sigüenza makes the following claim: granting that the prince is the soul of the body politic, he then has a responsibility for the order and the well-being of the body politic (which cannot take care of its order and well-being on its own) and, in virtue of this, the prince should then attend for the sake of his subjects to the best models of ruling available, which are often depicted in arches. Because of this, Sigüenza then writes the following:

... it is an estimable providence that [arches] function for the princes as mirrors, where they can recognize the virtues that must adorn the triumphal arches that are erected at the entrance of cities so that their hands seize the example, or that their authority and power aspire to the emulation of that which is symbolized in the guises of triumphs and the allegory of the great ones.¹³ (1984: 171)

12. In the original, ‘Levantar memorias eternas a la heroicidad de los príncipes más ha sido consecuencia de la gratitud que los inferiores les deben que a un desempeño de la veneración que su reverencia nos pide. Porque como la parte inferior de nuestra mortalidad obsequia a la superior, de la que le proviene el vivir, así las ciudades y los reinos, que sin la forma vivifica de los príncipes no subsistieran, es necesario el que reconozcan a estas almas políticas que les continúan la vida.’

13. In the original, ‘... es providencia estimable el que a los príncipes sirvan de espejo, donde atiendan a las virtudes con que han de adornarse los arcos triunfales que en sus entradas se erigen para que de allí sus manos tomen ejemplo, o su autoridad y poder aspire a la emulación de lo que en ellos se simboliza en los disfraces de triunfos y alegorías de magnos.’

As we can appreciate, Sigüenza clearly has a hortatory intent vis-à-vis the viceroy insofar as he explicitly states that the virtues symbolized in the arches should serve as models to be followed. When we consider Sor Juana's *Neptuno*, we can also find in the early paragraphs a strategy that consists in humbling herself with respect to the viceroy. First, she compares the command given to her by the Metropolitan Church to compose the *Neptuno* in honor of the viceroy to the command given by Joab to the woman of Tekoa to supplicate David with fake weeping to spare her son (2 Samuel 14). She then proceeds to offer an ekphrasis of the demeanor of the woman of Tekoa, suggesting that a plea voiced by an 'unknown, ignorant, and poor woman' is more likely to be heeded since the sight of feebleness deflates royal anger:

... the captain Joab used this stratagem for the pardon of Absalom with the offended majesty of David which was obtained through the woman of Tekoa, not because he deemed more efficacious the fake crying of an unknown, ignorant, and poor woman than his authority, eloquence and worth, but rather because the lightning of royal ire, moved by the memory of the crime, would not smite a weak subject, since that lightning always looks for resisting things to wreak havoc.¹⁴ (1957: 358)

After humbling herself in this fashion, Sor Juana then makes the following two claims. First, she is like the woman of Tekoa, whose words merely elicit the compassion and magnanimity of David vis-à-vis his son Absalom by *reminding* David that he already possesses these virtues which he exercised when he promised to protect the woman's son. Second, her own words and the arch built for the viceroy by the Metropolitan Church are akin to a mirror, intended merely to reflect the virtues that the viceroy already has so that he can exercise them extensively in his new role:

... this is because it is decorous to copy the reflection, just as in a mirror, of the perfections that are inaccessible in the original: the sun, which is the monarch of lights, imposes respect by not allowing to gaze at it directly.¹⁵ (1957: 358)

14. In the original, '... industria que usó el Capitán Joab en el perdón de Absalón con la ofendida Majestad de David, conseguido por medio de la Tecuites, no porque juzgase más eficaces los mentidos sollozos de una mujer no conocida, ignorante y pobre que su autoridad, elocuencia y valimiento, sino porque el rayo de la ira real incitada a los recuerdos del delito, no hiciera operación en el sujeto flaco, pues este siempre busca resistencias para ejecutar sus estragos'.

15. In the original, '... porque sea decoro copiar del reflejo, como en un cristal, las perfecciones que son inaccesibles en el original: respeto que se hace guardar el Sol, monarca de las luces, no permitiéndose a la vista.'

As this passage shows, Sor Juana also has a hortatory intent as she encourages the viceroy to act virtuously by offering to him a reflected image of his own greatness, so that he can be reminded of the virtues that he has and to act upon them. And, considering that Sor Juana and her arch function as mere mirrors, they can then fulfill their role as moral exhorters without putting in question the superiority of the viceroy. Having shown how both Sigüenza and Sor Juana subordinate themselves vis-a-vis the viceroy by using ekphrases so that they can offer moral exhortation, I will now consider some of the core moral virtues that both Sigüenza and Sor Juana exhort the viceroy to practice and how they both use ekphrasis to describe them in an enticing way.

4. The use of ekphrasis in the *Neptuno* and the *Theatro* to describe wisdom and piety

Given that Sigüenza and Sor Juana exhort the viceroy to act virtuously, their moral exhortations emphasize the practice of certain specific virtues. Since both are aware that the effectiveness of their exhortations greatly depends on how appealing they are to the viceroy, Sigüenza and Sor Juana both employ ekphrases to describe the virtues they want the viceroy to practice in an attractive way. Let me illustrate this with two examples. In the case of Sor Juana, the primary virtue that must be practiced is wisdom (*sabiduría*). To persuade the viceroy about the central importance of practicing wisdom, Sor Juana offers an ekphrasis of wisdom in the following passage that highlights its importance in an alluring fashion:

... wisdom is the main [virtue], as the root and source from which all others emerge, and this is even more visible in the prince, who *needs it so dearly for the guidance of government*, because the state may bear the prince not being liberal, not being pious, not being strong, not being noble, but it may not bear the prince not being wise, since it is *wisdom, and not gold, that crowns princes*.¹⁶ (1957: 367; my emphasis)

This passage is extremely interesting because the justifications that Sor Juana offers to show that wisdom is the key virtue for rulers are offered by means of an ekphrasis — which shows that ekphrasis is doing important philosophical work.

16. In the original, '... la sabiduría es la [virtud] más principal, como raíz y fuente de donde emanan todas las otras; y más en un príncipe, que tanto la necesita para la dirección del gobierno, pues pudiera muy bien la república sufrir que el príncipe no fuera liberal, no fuera piadoso, no fuera fuerte, no fuera noble, y sólo no se puede suplir que no sea sabio; porque la sabiduría, y no el oro, es quien corona a los príncipes.'

First, wisdom is crucial for rulers such as the viceroy because it is described by Sor Juana as a requisite for the guidance of government. Indeed, without wisdom, the other virtues cannot be properly exercised since wisdom functions as the root that grounds them all and allows them to flourish in appropriate ways. Second, for Sor Juana, wisdom is crucial for rulers because wisdom, rather than wealth or birth, is described as the quality or feature that provides a justification for the possession and the exercise of political power. Echoing here Aquinas' position in the prologue of his *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* (1961: 29) according to which it is the office of the wise man to direct others, Sor Juana seems then to exhort the viceroy in the following way: if you want to be a good ruler, practice wisdom, since that virtue will endow you with the crown, which represents the power to govern and direct others.

Let me consider how Sigüenza uses ekphrasis to make virtue attractive for the viceroy. Like Sor Juana, Sigüenza believes that a particular virtue plays a central role as the foundation of other virtues. However, this virtue is not wisdom for Sigüenza, but rather piety. To exhort the viceroy to practice piety, Sigüenza offers an ingenious ekphrasis of piety by using an epigram in which he describes the virtue through the effects it has on the actions of a prince:

The actions of constant faith
performed by the prince, never
can remain behind
if God lies ahead them.
The effects show this
with just demonstrations
because the actions are not twisted
if they are straightened by God.¹⁷ (1984: 197)

We can clearly observe here that the ekphrasis of piety in this epigram does philosophical work since it provides two justifications for the central role that Sigüenza attributes to it. First, if actions are performed by a prince piously (i.e., if God lies ahead of them), they are described by Sigüenza as 'never remaining behind' (i.e., being noble and heroic). Second, if the actions of a prince are inspired and guided by his reverence to God (i.e., if they are straightened by God), they are described by Sigüenza as 'not twisted' (i.e., as being oriented towards the good). To these two justifications, Sigüenza (1984: 198) adds a third one when he describes a bit further down a consequence from the piety manifested by the Aztecs when they followed the order of their god Huitzilopochtli

17. In the original, 'Acciones de fe constante // que obra el príncipe, jamás // se pueden quedar atrás // en teniendo a Dios delante. // Los efectos lo confiesan // con justas demostraciones // pues no tuercen las acciones // que sólo a Dios enderezan.'

to establish their capital in an islet in the middle of a lake: 'From this supposed shadow of a good principle [piety] stemmed the greatness and sovereignty that the Mexicans reached, earning the generous title of a great people.'¹⁸ In virtue of this, it is patent that Sigüenza's exhortation to the viceroy to be pious showcases piety as an attractive trait since it is described as a requirement for political greatness and sovereignty.

As we can appreciate, though Sor Juana and Sigüenza disagree on which virtue is the core or foundational one that a good ruler should have, they agree on the fact that there is a hierarchy of virtues where some virtues stem from others. Because of this, both think that the cultivation of these foundational virtues should receive the utmost attention, and they accordingly exhort the viceroy to practice them by describing them in detail, as I showed above. But their use of ekphrasis is not limited to conjuring mental pictures of wisdom and piety before the viceroy's mind. In addition to this, they also use ekphrasis to conjure mental pictures of the paintings where these virtues are symbolized to further strengthen their case. To see this, I will investigate how both Sor Juana and Sigüenza use ekphrasis to describe the paintings displayed in the façades of the arches.

5. The use of ekphrasis in the *Neptuno* and the *Theatro* to describe the paintings

As I stated previously, both Sor Juana and Sigüenza use ekphrasis not merely to describe the virtues that they want the incoming viceroy to practice, but also to describe the paintings upon the arches' façades where these virtues are symbolized. In both cases, their goal is to marshal the representational and emotive capacities of ekphrasis to conjure a mental image of the paintings that complements and reinforces the visual image of the actual paintings in his retinas, and to use that mental image to exhort him to practice the appropriate virtues.

To see this, I will consider first how Sigüenza proceeds by focusing on one example. In section 8 of the *Theatro* (which is concerned with a painting that depicts the Aztec emperor Motecuhzoma Ilhuicamina), Sigüenza (1984: 215) initially makes the following core claim: 'to achieve human happiness, princes must address matters of religion.'¹⁹ Having stressed this, he moves on to describe the painting depicting the Aztec emperor in these terms:

18. In the original, 'De esta imaginada sombra de buen principio se originó la grandeza y soberanía a la que se encumbraron los mexicanos, mereciendo la denominación generosa de gente grande'.

19. In the original, '... para conseguir la humana Felicidad, han de tratar los príncipes las materias de la religión.'

To represent him to the eyesight, the king was painted throwing an arrow to the sky (which is the meaning of his name) that was accompanied by this message: 'They were marching', and through which his piety was expressed. St. Ambrose corroborates my words in his book *On widows* where he calls arrows the prayers addressed to God, and states that these transform in arrows to triumph over the enemies: 'The prayer, albeit from further away, hits like the arrow; the arrow only reaches the enemy nearby, the prayer also wounds the enemy afar' ... There was next to him a shrine or altar, the flames of which hid amid the clouds with the same motto of the arrow: 'They were marching', and from their midst arose a horrifying storm of formidable lightning that was directed to some troops of defeated people with the following inscription: 'And they returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.'²⁰ (1984: 215–16)

After offering the previous ekphrasis, which is intended to elicit awe from the viceroy at the immense power of piety (since prayers to God are described by Sigüenza, following Ambrose's view, as wondrous arrows that have the capacity to defeat one's enemies), Sigüenza then exhorts the viceroy to emulate the example of piety depicted in the painting with these words:

We must expect that the most excellent Marquis of La Laguna will achieve the same things during his period of government, since he elevates his religion with so many admirable actions that edify his people, giving to everyone noble examples of his Christian piety.²¹ (1984: 217)

As we can see, Sigüenza's ekphrasis involves a description of the image of the painting that both highlights the virtue portrayed and shows to its primary addressee (i.e., the viceroy) the great benefits that its cultivation has. In virtue of this, the ekphrasis is *prima facie* well-crafted since it possesses all the elements that Ruth Webb (2009: 90) portrays in her characterization of a vivid ekphrasis:

20. In the original, 'Para representarlo a la vista se pintó a este rey arrojando al cielo una saeta (significación de su nombre) a que acompañaba esta letra: "Ibant," y en que se expresó su piedad. Dame la comprobación San Ambrosio, lib. de *Viduis*, donde llamó saetas a las oraciones que se dirigen a Dios, y en que éstas se transforman para triunfar de los enemigos: "La oración, aunque más lejos, como la flecha hiere; la flecha sólo llega al adversario que está cerca, la oración también vulnera al enemigo que se encuentra lejos." ... Estaba allí inmediata una ara o altar, cuyas llamas se escondían entre las nubes, con el mismo mote de la saeta: "Ibant," y de entre aquéllas, que era la parte adonde se dirigía sobre algunas tropas de gente derrotada, se dejaba precipitar una tempestad horrorosa de formidables rayos con esta inscripción: "Y volvían a semejanza de un relámpago."'

21. In the original, 'Lo mismo debemos esperar que obtendrá el excelentísimo señor marqués de la Laguna en el tiempo de su gobierno, cuando con actos tan repetidos de que se admira y edifica el pueblo califica su religión, dando a todos ejemplos no vulgares de su Cristiana piedad.'

the description *represents* the painting on the arch to the viceroy; it *informs* him of the moral significance of what is depicted (in particular, by referencing a prominent Christian authority—namely, Ambrose); and, finally, it elicits—or, at least, aims to elicit—a specific emotion (i.e., awe) to exhort him to practice the virtue symbolized in the painting (i.e., piety).

Let me now turn to Sor Juana. In her case, prior to introducing an ekphrasis of a painting's image, she usually tends to remind the viceroy about the mythological event that the relevant painting is based upon. Having done this, she typically moves to describe the painting in question in a way that makes the viceroy identify closely with the god Neptune. To see this in detail, I will consider a specific example. When Sor Juana describes the third painting of her arch, which was inspired by the mythological story where a compassionate Neptune anchored Delos so that Leto could give birth to Phoebus and Diana, she offers the following ekphrasis:

He, then, was the one who, moved by compassion for the wretched Leto, affixed the moving island with his trident, which worked as a peg for her wavering fortune, so as to offer a stable abode to the distressed beauty, thus aiding Lucina, alone in her hour of need; and, by bringing a beautiful palm tree, he gave to the world and, in addition, to heaven, the two shining lights that are Phoebus and Diana ... On the board, the island is decorated with courageous and colorful lands, luxuriant trees and intricate cliffs; the brush expressed with elegant decorum Leto's sorrow in her countenance as well as the beauty of the two gentle light of Phoebus and Diana; and on the top was found, majestically adorned, our Neptune who affixed it with the trident.²² (1957: 379–80)

After offering the aforementioned description, which provides an illustration of the virtue of compassion manifested by Neptune (who was depicted in the painting using the viceroy's facial features), Sor Juana then compares Delos to Mexico City, which was originally built by the Aztecs on an islet. In the following poem that was paired with the painting, Sor Juana exhorts the viceroy to be a better Neptune than the original one by signing compassionate laws that will 'affix' Mexico (i.e., provide stability):

22. In the original, 'Él fue, pues, el que movido a compasión de la infeliz Latona, afirmó con el tridente la movediza isla, sirviendo éste de clavo a su voluble fortuna, para dar estable acogida a su acongojada hermosura, a quien sirviendo de Lucina, sola su necesidad, y de arrimo una hermosa palma, dio al mundo, y mucho más al cielo, aquellos dos lucientes faroles de Febo y Diana. ... Adórnase en el tablero, la isla, de valientes y vistosos países, copados árboles e intrincados riscos; expresó el pincel con gallarda propiedad la aflicción de Latona en el semblante, como la hermosura en las dos tiernas luces de Febo y Diana; descubriase arriba, majestuosamente adornado, nuestro Neptuno, con el tridente que la afirmaba.'

Asteria, you who used to wander at sea,
 battered by winds and waves,
 at the trident's touch you become a fixed island
 and Leto's refuge and shelter.
 Oh trembling Mexico, do not fear
 seeing your republic enlightened
 with the coming of He who, with triple rule,
 will affix the state with laws!²³ (1957: 380–81)

Sor Juana's use of ekphrasis in this example is adroitly woven with the mythological story considering that she seamlessly transitions from the brief retelling of Leto's plight and its happy resolution to the description of the painting's image, stressing at the very end of her ekphrasis the overarching position of Neptune, who exemplifies compassion by affixing the island with his trident so that Leto can give birth. What is particularly interesting about this ekphrasis is that Sor Juana does not only rely on the description of the qualities of Neptune (i.e., compassion) to engage in moral exhortation vis-à-vis the viceroy but also on the description of other pictorial elements that are characterized using moral terms: indeed, the lands of Delos are characterized as courageous ('valientes') and the sorrow in Leto's face is said to be expressed by the brush with elegant decorum ('gallarda propiedad'). Thus, for Sor Juana, it is not just the idealized description of the viceroy as Neptune that is used for moral exhortation, but also the description of the natural environment depicted in the painting and the description of the painting technique itself that are used to present certain virtues that she hopes the viceroy will emulate.

Considering this, we can conclude that Sor Juana, just like Sigüenza, uses the representative and emotive capacities of ekphrasis to bring before the viceroy's mind a mental picture of the paintings on the façade of her arch that complements the visual image in the viceroy's physical eyes. This mental picture of the third painting is intended, as is the mental picture that Sor Juana paints of wisdom, to move the viceroy and to exhort him to practice a certain virtue, which in this case is compassion. This shows that just like the ekphrases of the virtues discussed in section 4, the ekphrases of the paintings that both Sor Juana and Sigüenza provide perform philosophical work since, in accordance with the rhetorical and philosophical ideal expressed by Cicero in *De Oratore* (1967: 281), they are used to prove, to delight, and to move. Having detailed how Sigüenza and Sor Juana use ekphrases of the paintings to exhort the viceroy to cultivate

23. In the original, 'Asteria, que antes por el mar vagante // era de vientos y ondas combatida // ya al toque de tridente isla constante// es de Latona amparo y acogida. // ¡Oh Méjico no temas vacilante // tu república ver, esclarecida, //viniendo el que, con mando triplicado, // firmará con las leyes el Estado!'

various virtues, I will show in the next section how they both use ekphrases to create a composite audience made up of various stakeholders (i.e., the incoming viceroy and his Novohispanic subjects) who have different but complementary interests, and how the creation of this composite audience reflects and reinforces the process of creation of a unified political entity.

6. Ekphrasis and the creation of a composite audience in the *Neptuno* and the *Theatro*

In the previous sections, I have argued that ekphrasis does for both Sigüenza and Sor Juana important philosophical work in the *Theatro* and the *Neptuno* to the extent it enables them to engage in moral exhortation vis-à-vis the viceroy by conjuring different intentional objects (in particular, mental pictures of certain virtues and of the paintings that represent them) and then using these objects to charm the viceroy and move him to cultivate certain virtues. In this section, I argue that the ekphrasis also plays an important role in the creation of a composite audience with various stakeholders who have different but complementary interests, and that the creation of this composite audience is intended to reflect and reinforce the political process through which the viceroy and his subjects are merged into a unified political entity.

To see how this was accomplished, it is first important to remember that, as some scholars have remarked (e.g., Pascual Buxó 1998 and Kirk 1998), both arches and their corresponding ekphrastic texts were created to respond to specific interests: the viceroy expected praise and his Novohispanic subjects expected him to address certain specific needs such as the need to complete the cathedral. Since both the incoming viceroy and his new subjects would be present at the enthronement ceremony, Sor Juana and Sigüenza took advantage of this fact to use ekphrasis to fulfill these expectations while creating a composite audience made up of various stakeholders having different interests. Indeed, Sor Juana and Sigüenza exploited the representational and emotive capacities of ekphrasis to bring a common mental picture before the minds of the viceroy and his Novohispanic subjects. The sharing of this mental picture allowed the creation of a composite audience made up of various stakeholders having different interests: the viceroy was presented with an idealized and flattering image of himself that was intended to satisfy his expectations of praise, and his subjects were presented with the same idealized and flattering image of the viceroy that was intended to convey their expectations about his future rule.²⁴

24. The fact that the same image could play these two functions is nicely explained by Alejandro Cañeque (2004: 23–4). In the analysis he offers in the following passage: ‘The viceroy must look in the mirror, not to see an ideal image that is better than himself, an image that can be used

To see in more detail how this composite audience was created, I will show how Sor Juana and Sigüenza proceed. In the case of Sor Juana's *Neptuno*, the creation of a composite audience that shares a common mental image is particularly visible in her description of the seventh painting placed on the arch, which was in its upper left-hand corner. This painting depicted the contest between Neptune and Minerva for the naming of Athens. Sor Juana provides an initial ekphrasis of the painting, which goes as follows:

The ingenious contest was boiled down to a demonstration, which is the best proof of merits. And then, after the great Neptune stroke the earth with his trident, a magnificent horse emerged, looking down on the earth from which it stemmed and forecasting wars with his powerful neighing ... The demonstration of the goddess followed, and it was a beautiful olive tree, giving messages of peace in its blossoming branches. (1957: 389)²⁵

After the previous ekphrasis of the painting, Sor Juana then moves on to argue that, since Minerva is just a manifestation of one aspect of Neptune's nature (in particular, an expression of his understanding or reason), Minerva's victory in the contest is not a triumph of one divinity over another, but rather the subjection of all the passions of Neptune to the rule of his reason. Having made this claim, she then addresses the viceroy and his future subjects present at the spectacle in the following terms:

Is there a more elegant and fitting representation for our Prince than the one who achieved so many victories over himself, who subjected to the rule of reason all his actions and who prized himself to be vanquished by his own wisdom? Let this most noble city henceforth take pride in its wise Neptune, because it is governed by the one who is only governed by reason. (1957: 391–92)²⁶

to correct his own defects, but to behold an image that is perfect in a double sense: because it is a faithful copy of the viceroy and, at the same time, because it is a reflection of an abstract idea, that of the perfect prince.'

25. In the original, 'Redújose la ingeniosa contienda a demostración, que es mejor testigo de méritos; y entonces, hiriendo la tierra con el tridente el gran Neptuno, salió un soberbio caballo, despreciando la tierra que le había producido, y anunciando guerras con sus sonoros relinchos ... Siguióse la demostración de la diosa, y fue una hermosa oliva, dando verdes anuncios de paz en sus floridos ramos.'

26. In the original, '¿Pues qué más elegante y propia representación de nuestro Príncipe, que uno que alcanzó tan gloriosos vencimientos de sí mismo, y que sujetó tanto a la regla de la razón sus acciones, que se preció de ser vencido de su propia sabiduría? Gloríese desde hoy esta nobilísima ciudad en su Neptuno sabio, pues la gobierna aquel a quien sólo la razón gobierna.'

In the beginning of this passage, Sor Juana first addresses the viceroy (who is her primary addressee), offering to him an idealized mental picture of himself *qua* Neptune and asserting, by means of a rhetorical question, that this mental picture fits his actual self. Having done this, she addresses the citizens of Mexico City in attendance (who are her secondary addressees), exhorting them to feel pride at the fact that they are governed by an exceptional ruler who is ‘only governed by reason.’ In my view, this passage has two main goals. First, it aims to create a composite audience given that it is the same mental picture shared by the viceroy and his subjects that is used both to flatter the viceroy and to convey the hopes of the Novohispanic society for a good ruler. Second, it aims to reflect and reinforce the political process through which the viceroy and his Novohispanic subjects are merged into a unified political body. Indeed, as Sor Juana suggests in the passage, though her two main addressees (i.e., the viceroy and her fellow Novohispanic citizens) are different, they are no longer separate given that, in virtue of his enthronement, the viceroy has become ‘our prince’ (‘nuestro príncipe’). And, because the viceroy is now bound to his subjects as a component of the same unified political body, the citizens of New Spain can appropriately feel pride about his deeds.

Having seen how Sor Juana uses ekphrasis to create a composite audience with different interests and to reflect and reinforce the political process through which the viceroy and his subjects become a unified political entity, I will now turn to examine how Sigüenza proceeds. In section 4 of the *Theatro*, he offers an ekphrasis of the painting depicting the founding of the Tenochtitlan by the first Aztec emperor Acamapichtli to illustrate the importance of hope:

Acamapichtli was painted weeding the intricate reedbeds of the lagoon, which is what he did to expand the borders of the then small Tenochtitlan, which is now is the most populous city of Mexico. He held in his hands reeds (which is the meaning of his name) and he gave them to Hope, who not only assisted him, but also built out of them a humble hut or unprotected *xacalli*, which was gifted to Fame. (1984: 201)²⁷

After offering the previous ekphrasis of the painting, Sigüenza then proceeds to address the viceroy and the citizens of New Spain, using the shared mental image of Acamapichtli holding reeds that he has brought before their minds for two purposes. First, after creating a composite audience with various stakeholders having different interests through the conjuring of a shared mental picture,

27. In the original, ‘Pintóse Acamapichtli desmontando los intrincados carrizales de la laguna, que fue lo que hizo para dilatar los términos de la entonces pequeña Tenochtitlan, que ya es ahora ciudad populosísima de México; ocupábase las manos con unas cañas (significación de su nombre) dándoselas a la esperanza, que no sólo lo asistía sino que de ellas formaba una choza humilde o desabrigado *xacalli*, que entregaba a la fama.’

Sigüenza aims to fulfill the interests of these various stakeholders. Indeed, in the case of the viceroy, Sigüenza uses a mental picture to offer praise of the viceroy's power and authority since the reed is a symbol of power and authority because Christ was given a reed to symbolize his power and authority (Matthew 27:29). In the case of his fellow Novohispanic citizens, Sigüenza uses a mental picture to convey to the viceroy that his new subjects expect his rule to bring order and stability, which are also symbolized by the reed insofar as reeds were used in building the foundations of Tenochtitlan, as Eduardo Matos Moctezuma (2018: 47) highlights. Second, Sigüenza uses the shared mental picture of Acamapichtli holding reeds that his ekphrasis conjures to reflect and reinforce the political process of the incoming viceroy and his Novohispanic subjects merging into a unified political entity. To see this, consider the following passage:

... the fact that the Mexican government originated among the reeds of a lagoon would be an auspicious omen of our bliss because, just as music originated with reeds in the opinion of Theophrastus in chapter 12 of book 4 of *On Plants* and of Pliny in chapter 36 of book 16 of *Natural History*, in the same manner they maintain the economy with harmony and adjusted compass. (1984: 202)²⁸

As the previous passage shows, Sigüenza uses the shared mental picture of Acamapichtli holding reeds to reflect and reinforce the emergence of a unified political entity created by the viceroy's enthronement. Indeed, as he suggests, considering that reeds were used not only to build Tenochtitlan but also to create music, they function as a symbol of the merging of the incoming viceroy and his Novohispanic subjects into a unified political entity. The reason for this interpretation is that, within the context of a musical performance that is executed by an ensemble—which Sigüenza compares implicitly in this passage to the process of ruling a polity—reeds allow the harmonious integration of the cheironomer or the conductor with the performers into a unified group in virtue of the reed playing a twofold role. On the one side, the conductor relies on a reed both to cue the entrance of instruments and to mark the changing of tempo during a performance. On the other side, the performers use percussive or wind instruments that are made of reeds to produce sounds, which are then woven harmoniously into a melody under the direction of the conductor.²⁹ Thus, in virtue of

28. In the original, '... sería pródigo presagio de nuestra dicha el que el mexicano gobierno se principiase entre las cañas de una laguna, porque así como de ellas se originó la música, en el sentir de Teofrasto, lib. 4 de *Plant.*, cap. 12, y de Plinio, lib. 16, *Nat. Hist.*, cap. 36, de la misma manera se continúa su economía con la armonía y ajustado compás.'

29. When Sigüenza compares the prince to the conductor of a musical orchestra who cues the entrances of instruments and marks the changes of tempos to help the performers play harmoni-

this, we can see how Sigüenza uses ekphrasis, just as Sor Juana, both to create a composite audience and to reflect and reinforce the political process of the viceroy and his Novohispanic subjects merging into a unified political entity.

7. Conclusion

I have argued in this paper that the *Neptuno Alegórico* and the *Theatro de Virtudes Políticas* are not only remarkable as erudite Baroque panegyrics, but that they are also noteworthy from a philosophical perspective as ekphrastic moral mirrors (i.e., as works that aim to engage in moral exhortation vis-à-vis a prince by means of vivid descriptions of moral virtues and of works of art depicting those virtues). I have also argued that Sor Juana and Sigüenza use adroitly the resources of ekphrasis both to create a composite audience made up of diverse stakeholders with different interests and to reflect and reinforce the process of the creation of a unified political entity composed by the incoming viceroy and his Novohispanic subjects. If what I have argued here is correct, some questions emerge. In particular, how are ekphrastic moral mirrors connected to other genres in which philosophers practice moral exhortation in the Early Modern period? Are all ekphrastic moral mirrors exclusively centered on the description of triumphal arches, or do they also focus other non-artistic objects to engage in moral exhortation? Finally, could we potentially imitate and use some of the ekphrastic techniques employed by Sor Juana and Sigüenza to carry out moral exhortation for certain groups (e.g., politicians) in our contemporary society and, if so, how could we efficiently accomplish this? I intend to address some of these questions in future work.

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ously, he follows an established tradition within seventeenth century Spanish iconography where monarchs were depicted as musical conductors establishing harmony among their subjects. For more details about this tradition and discussion of various examples, see Sara González (2016).

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Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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