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Calderón's Snakes: Emblems, Lore and Imagery

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¿Qué sierpe astuta sus viboreznos no cría con
cariño y con blandura, pareciéndole que son, lle-
nos de escamas y artugas, más hermosas que las
aves, que ramilletes de plumas, cuando ellos la
tierra arrastran, esotras el aire surcan?

(*Fortunas de Andrómeda y Perseo, Obras com-
pletas 2: 1675*)

Serpentine imagery abounds in Spanish Golden Age literature. The snake, in all of its manifestations, was imbued with rich and varied nuances doubtless familiar to its intended audience. The confluence of Biblical, classical and mythological traditions, along with the pseudoscience of natural history, offered the creative writer a panoply of evocative associations that could be invoked by the mere mention of a given reptile. James Hall, in *Diccionario de temas y símbolos artísticos*, details many of the symbolic properties of the serpent, especially in iconographic representation, and summarizes its contrary depictions as: "Símbolo del mal y sinónimo bíblico de Satanás, 'la serpiente antigua'. Pero la serpiente significaba también la fertilidad, la sabiduría y el poder de curar, y formaba parte de los ritos religiosos de los pueblos primitivos" (283). In *Diccionario de iconografía*, Federico Revilla adds: "El simbolismo de la serpiente tiene un número desconcertante de valencias, pero todos sus símbolos convergen hacia una misma idea central: es inmortal porque se regenera; por tanto, es una 'fuerza' de la luna, y en cuanto tal dispensa fecundidad, ciencia (profecía) e incluso inmortalidad" (337). Calderón de la Barca is but one of many Golden Age playwrights who availed themselves of visually striking snake imagery to enhance poetic metaphors. Indeed, rare is the Calderón play without frequent evocation of snakes and the lore associated with them. Calderón's snakes come in many varieties: *culebras*, *áspides*, *víboras*, *hidras*, *sierpes* and *serpientes*. The dramatist's predilection for serpentine imagery is a logical consequence of his interest in all facets

of natural lore.¹ This study is an exploration of Calderón's repeated cultivation of the snake as a vehicle for poetic expression, with particular attention focused on images that may derive from the emblem tradition.

A number of critical studies have shed some light on Calderón's debt to emblem literature.² The dramatist's familiarity with the discourse of emblems is evidenced in his repeated use of existing emblem motifs in his plays; in his verbal depiction of blazons, devices, hieroglyphs and enigmas (virtual synonyms for the emblem by the seventeenth-century); and in his explicit mention of emblems and the technical vocabulary associated with them, such as the *mote* (the emblem's *inscriptio*). Given Calderón's undeniable knowledge of emblematics, it is certainly plausible that some of his information on snake lore issued from the numerous and popular collections of emblems and devices that flourished in Spain and in the rest of Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Frederick A. de Armas has studied one fascinating emblem motif involving snakes in a number of Calderón's plays in his article on "The Serpent Star: Dream and Horoscope in Calderón's *La vida es sueño*." This motif of ingratitude depicts a mother viper horribly killed as she gives birth to her snakelings, who mercilessly shred her side as they rush to come into the world. Covarrubias Horozco relates this belief in his *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española*, under the entry for *Bibora*:

Escriven della que concibe por la boca, y que en el mesmo acto corta la cabeça al macho, apretando los dientes, o por el gusto que recibe, o por el desgusto que teme recibir después al parir de los vivoreznos, los quales siendo en número muchos, los postreros que han tomado más cuerpo y fuerça, malsufridos y cansados de esperar, rompen el pecho de la madre (218).

Covarrubias Horozco, an emblematicist himself, goes on to describe a number of emblems and devices that depict the viper. In Spanish emblem literature, we encounter this motif in at least two sources: Hernando de Soto's *Emblemas moralizadas* (1599) and Juan Francisco de Villalva's *Empresas espirituales y morales* (1613). In Soto's emblem, the matricidal snakelings kill their mother to avenge an injustice she perpetrated on their dead father, as the verse *subscriptio* indicates: "En venganza del agravio, / Que hize a su padre muerto, / Es en mis hijos muy cierto, / El nacer con tal resabio. / Por él dexo de vivir, / Y aunque dellos madre soy, / Exemplo y consejo doy, / Con parirlos, y

morir" (Emb. 3, f. 5). The injustice hinted at by Soto is clarified in the Spanish translation of Gabriele Simeoni's *Devisas o emblemas heroicas y morales* (1561). An emblem from this collection depicts the same motif described above, with the motto "*Ingratis servire nefas*." The prose *amplificatio* indicates that the viper has devoured her mate after love-making: "quise aquí poner por postrera empresa una de l'ingratitude semejante a la viperea la qual matta al macho aviéndole dado plazer y aviendo concebido, llevado y criado en su vientre sus chiquites, también la matan a ella" (263). Villalva's emblem is quite similar to the two already enumerated in its woodcut illustration of snakelings bursting through the side of their agonizing mother, but the meaning is somewhat distinct. Here the mother is blameless. The fault lies instead in the treacherous ingratitude of the matricidal snakelings: "Buen pago a vuestra madre le avéys dado, / Biboreznos traydores, / Con una impiedad tan conocida, / Pues rompiéndole el lado, / Con terribles dolores, / Le days la muerte, porque os dio la vida, / Con vosotros se anida / Y vuestro rastro sigue / Quien a sus padres míseros persigue, / Con afecto enemigo, / Pecado digno, de cruel castigo" (f. 49r).

Calderón utilizes this violent and graphic image in no fewer than ten plays. It occurs primarily, though not exclusively, in the more serious dramas, rather than in the comedies. De Armas, in "The Serpent Star: Dream and Horoscope in Calderón's *La vida es sueño*," discusses the emblem of the mother viper murdered by her young with reference to *La vida es sueño* and *La devoción de la cruz*. In "Icons of Saturn: Astrologer-Kings in Calderón's Comedias," the same critic again takes up this emblem motif, adding new examples from *Los tres afectos de amor* and *La hija del aire* (118-19). De Armas explores the emblematic motif with respect to *La vida es sueño* once more in his *The Return of Astræa* (110). We will not repeat those passages here, but concentrate instead on those omitted by De Armas. The first example of a matricidal snakeling is evoked in a rather generic sense in *El mayor monstruo del mundo*, when Mariene uses it as one example in a string to show that many creatures altruistically die while giving life: "Digalo en bramidos roncós / la víbora que mordiendo / sus entrañas, poco a poco / se despedaza, sacando / muchas vidas de un aborto" (OC 2: 484). Like so many emblematicists who borrowed an existing emblem plate to create a new emblem, Calderón has fashioned his own meaning for the emblematic image. He seems to have conflated the *pictura* of the popular snake emblem with the meaning of another popular European emblem: the selfless pelican that tears apart its breast in order to nourish its young, as in the emblem from Remón's collection (f. 66v).

In all other cases in the secular drama of Calderón, the homicidal snakelings are a metaphor for the child who causes the death of the mother in the birth process. In some instances, the violent emergence into the world represents a premonition of a child's evil character or fate. In this capacity, the snakelings that kill in childbirth can function as a complement to another favorite dramatic device of Calderón: the ominous astrological prediction. This emblem motif is especially effective as a manifestation of inner guilt feelings, as in *Las manos blancas no ofenden*, when Lisarda tells Nise: "Desde el primero / oriente mío, ¿no fui / víbora, pues que naciendo / la vida costé a mi madre?" (OC 1: 1086). The same effect is achieved in *La devoción de la cruz*, when Curcio explains: ". . . En tus entrañas, / como la víbora, traes / a quien te ha de dar la muerte. Indicio ha sido bastante / el parto infame que esperas" (OC 2: 405). We can cite one more example of the dramatic character doomed from birth and acutely aware of the potentially tragic flaw. It proceeds from *La fiera, el rayo y la piedra*, where Anajarte explains to Lisi:

Ya de Trinacria sabéis
que había nacido heredera,
si mi estrella no estorbara
lo que disponía mi estrella:
pues tan contraria al primero
natal se mostró y violenta,
que póstuma de mi padre,
nací de mi madre muerta.
De suerte que racional
víbora humana pudieran
decir que fui pues dos vidas,
naciendo, mi vida cuesta (OC 2: 1600).

Calderón often uses the emblematic motif of the matricidal snakelings to endow his characters with a psychological dilemma; they internalize the emblem's usual meaning of ingratitude and transform it into a guilt complex that they must struggle to overcome in the course of the drama.

The remaining examples of snakes that kill their bearer at birth are perhaps less dramatically effective, although no less shocking in the visual image that they evoke. In several instances, a father discloses the circumstances of his wife's death to the responsible child. Such is the case, for example, in *Apolo y Clímene*, when the monarch Admeto proclaims to his daughter and others that she: "bien como víbora hu-

mana, / nació reventando el seno / de las maternas entrañas, / falseándome en que una muera, / el gozo de que otra nazca" (OC 2: 1830). An audience familiar with the emblem tradition would be able to read a subtle accusation of ingratitude into Admeto's proclamation. Similar passages can be found in *Los tres afectos de amor* (OC 2: 1187) and *La vida es sueño* (OC 2: 507).

We will conclude the examination of the matricidal snakeling in Calderón's secular drama with a brief elaboration of its manifestation in two other dramas. Federico, in *En esta vida todo es verdad y toda mentira*, states in a monologue: "el póstumo que dejó / humana víbora fue, / que, reventando a su madre, / en los montes se ocultó" (OC 2: 1148). And, finally, in *Fortunas de Andrómeda y Perseo*, the latter complains to his mother Danae that he did *not* die as a baby: "O ¿por qué (ya que pariendo, / víbora no reventaste) / aquel derrotado leño, / que fue mi primera cuna, / no hiciste mi monumento?" (OC 2: 1644). Calderón's fascination with this emblem may be explained by its effective and concise way of revealing the psychological turmoil of his protagonists.

A second manifestation of folklore involving snakes that appears with some frequency in Calderón's plays is also present in a Spanish emblem book, although we cannot assert categorically that the emblem constituted his source. The emblem in question appears in one of the *Emblemas morales* (1591) of Juan de Horozco y Covarrubias, the elder brother of Sebastián de Covarrubias Horozco. The plate or *pictura* features a snake inside the shirt of a man who stands near a fire. The verse *subscriptio* clarifies the emblem's fundamental meaning of ingratitude: "siendo el culebro sólo conocido / por animal de mil pinturas lleno, / hallóle uno de yelo esperecido, / y quiso recogerle al propio seno: / donde con el calor desencogido, / no tardó en esparzir de su veneno, / y desta suerte el bien se le agradece, / que hazer bien a los tales tal merece" (f. 136r). The ingratitude of the snake warmed at the bosom of man is evident in a number of Calderón's plays. A spectator or reader aware of the lore associated with the snake needs only a brief allusion to be able to conjure in his imagination both the picture represented in the emblem and the meaning that it conveys.

The most explicit example of the snake that "bites the hand that feeds it" occurs in *Duelos de amor y lealtad*. When a soldier delivers the prisoner Toante to Alejandro, the king remarks: "Decid el áspid que abriga, / aterido entre la yerba, / simple seno, para que / cobrado al calor le muerda" (OC 2: 1500). In other plays Calderón alludes rather elliptically to the motif by simply mentioning the asp sheltered in one's breast. This is the case with *El galán fantasma*: "esta ansia, este

veneno, / áspid ingrato que abrigué en mi seno" (OC 1: 649), as well as with *Mañanas de abril y mayo*: "Yo crié dentro del pecho / el áspid que me mordió" (OC 1: 594). Emblematic ingratitude is very popular in the plays of Calderón. The snake that so treacherously repays the efforts of its savior is even more evident than the snakelings that kill their mother.³ Calderón exploits the emblematic image to convey irony and pathos with great verbal economy.

Golden Age naturalists believed that the snake was able to rejuvenate by the ritual of shedding its skin. Such an appearance of literal regeneration was logically adapted by the emblematisers as an icon for spiritual regeneration. One example from the emblem books is found in Villalva's *Empresas espirituales y morales* (1613). The emblem depicts a snake that slithers between several rocks to lose its old skin. The verse *subscriptio* reads in part: "Lucha la Sierpe entre esta piedra y suda, / Quando mudar pretende / La piel antigua, denegrida y fea. / Parece que se ofende / Mas quando así se estrecha y se desnuda / De otra hermosa y juvenil se arrea" (f.93r).⁴ Calderón pays homage to this belief in several of his plays. The prince in *El gran príncipe de Fez*, for example, refers to his own spiritual rebirth with a telling simile: "apenas habré dejado, / como serpiente, la piel / de antiguo hombre, y de hombre nuevo / vestido de candidez, / lavándome en el cristal / que, no haciéndome volver / al materno seno, me hace / que nazca segunda vez..." (OC 2: 1396). *El monstruo de los jardines* provides further evidence. Aquiles refers to "Aquestos adornos viles" that he intends to abandon in a garden: "queden en él por despojos, / bien como anciano trofeo / de culebra que renueva / juntas la piel y el aliento" (OC 2: 2020). Again, by invoking a simple analogy from the natural world, Calderón is able to conjure up a wealth of associations, both erudite and moral, familiar to the spectator through the popular emblem books, among other possible sources.

At least one play presents the picture of a snake coiled in a circle and biting its tail, a traditional emblem of time.⁵ Yupanqui, an *indio galán* in the play *La aurora en Copacabana*, narrates the description of this motif: "¿Y que mayor que haber visto / una escamada culebra / tal vez, que todo el contorno / enroscadamente cerca / hasta morderse la cola / dando a su círculo vuelta?" (OC 2: 1316). Another emblematic legend concerning snakes in the dramas of Calderón involves the monstrous hydra of Herculean myth, which sprang multiple new heads for each one severed. It is a logical metaphor of misfortune. In *La dama duende*, don Manuel declares: "Hidras parecen las desdichas mías / al renacer de sus cenizas frías" (OC 1: 271). Calderón appears to combine here the myth of the hydra with that of the phoenix. Ange-

la, in *Fuego de dios en el querer bien*, endows the viper with this attribute normally associated with the hydra: "Beatriz, pues nuestras desdichas / víboras son, y se vea / nacer mil donde una muere, / mueran antes de nacer" (OC 1: 1285).⁶ In Spanish emblems, the hydra heads represent both multiplying sins (Villalva, f. 103r) and sedition (Fernández de Heredia 158). Calderón's meaning of self-perpetuating misfortunes represents only a slight variation from those encountered in the emblem books.

Other snake lore in the secular drama of Calderón has no exact parallel in Spanish emblem collections, but can be considered emblematic in the broader acceptance of the term: an icon from the natural world is morally exemplary. Calderón and his contemporaries found in the snake ample evidence of the Baroque *topos* of the deceit of appearances. The legendary basilisk, for example, was thought to lull its victims off guard with the pleasant hiss of its voice before striking with its poison. Several plays provide echoes of this belief. In *El maestro de danzar*, Enrique compares Leonor to the basilisk: "¡Mira cuál es el hechizo / de tus encantos, Leonor! / Que en ser un basilisco / el que me está abriendo el pecho, / te obedece, adormecido / al conjuro de tu voz" (OC 1: 1565-66). A similar complaint is voiced by Laura in *Saber del mal y del bien* in her metaphor for love: "¡Ay amor, serpiente ingrata, / que en sus afectos retrata la pasión que me provoca; / pues halaga con la boca / a quien con la cola mata!" (OC 2: 230). Likewise, in *La hija del aire I*, Semiramis compares Arceta to: "la serpiente que con silbos / halaga para morder" (OC 2: 724). To cite one more example, in *A secreto agravio, secreta venganza*, don Lope counsels himself: "espere-mos ocasión / sufriendo y disimulando; / y pues la serpiente halaga / con pecho de ofensas lleno, / yo, hasta verter mi veneno, / es bien que lo mismo haga" (OC 2: 448). All of these examples are used to great effect in emphasizing the poignant irony of love's bittersweet nature. The simple mention of the basilisk's hiss results in an emblematic depiction of danger in beauty.

Perhaps Calderón's most poetic depiction of the snake as representative of the *engaño de las apariencias* is based on the pathos evoked by the contrast of beautiful nature (flowers) that disguises sudden death (asp bite). Frederick A. de Armas has studied a number of examples of the asp hidden among flowers in a different dramatist in "Poison in a Golden Cup: A Senecan Image in Claramonte's *Comedias*." Calderón was also fond of combining the motifs of poisonous asp and beautiful flower, although he omits the golden cup in the examples adduced below. In *La niña de Gómez Arias*, the title father decides to abandon Dorotea while she sleeps, because: "es un áspid para mí, /

pues entre sus flores varias / traidoramente mañosa / mortales venenos guarda / . . . / que no hay víbora pisada / más ponzoñosa a mis ojos" (OC 2: 806). The treacherous "snake in the grass" also appears in *Argenis y Poliarco*, when Eristenes comments on a *banda* that has found its way into the wrong hands: "y también es la que tiene / en su hermosura cubierta / la muerte, como entre flores / el áspid, porque está llena / de veneno" (OC 1: 1933). Like the basilisk's alluring hiss, the beauty of the flowers masks great peril. The deceitful asp that hides in the flowers in order to kill constitutes one of the favorite snake images in Calderón.⁷

Another curious and emblematic legend involving snakes in the secular drama of Calderón is the suicidal serpent that ingests its own venom. In *Mujer, llora y vencerás*, Margarita declares: "víbora he sido: mi propia / ponzoña me ha dado muerte" (OC 1: 1428). The lesson to be learned from this functionally emblematic image is that words and actions can return to haunt their originator. Another example is provided in *Ni amor se libra de amor*, as Cupid establishes an analogy between himself and the viper: "pues de la misma manera / que de la víbora el seno, / si está de veneno lleno, / le arroja por descansar, / y donde le vuelve a hallar, / muere a su mismo veneno, / así yo . . ." (OC 2: 1956). This motif of the need for prudence and responsibility (possible mottoes for Calderón's word emblem), is employed to great dramatic effect in *El médico de su honra* when Gutierre comes to realize the significance of having uttered aloud the word *celos*:

¡Qué mal hice! Vuelva, vuelva
al pecho la voz. Mas no,
que si es ponzoña que engendra
mi pecho, si no me dio
la muerte (¡ay de mí!) al verterla,
al volverla a mí podrá;
que de la víbora cuentan
que la mate su ponzoña
si fuera de sí la encuentra (OC 2: 335).

Variations on this theme include the insatiable asp so intent on murder that it rests only when it kills itself (*De un castigo, tres venganzas*, OC 2: 39); the viper that, tired of its poison, bites itself to death (*El castillo de Lindabridis*, OC 1: 2092) and the basilisk that kills itself when it views its reflection (*Las tres justicias en una*, OC 2: 680 and *Fortunas de Andrómeda y Perseo*, OC 2: 1668). The basilisk, in fact,

was alleged to be able to kill simply by looking at its victim (OC 1: 1001; OC 2: 840 & 1188).

Other anecdotes of snake lore that can be viewed as word emblems occur with less frequency. If the basilisk can kill with its sight, Calderón also alleged that the viper can fell its victims with its breath alone, as Beatriz announces in *No hay burlas con el amor*, when she thinks that Leonor has a secret lover: "pues víbora será humana, / que con su, inficione, aliento" (OC 1: 501). The intentionally violent and comic hyperbaton is a jab at the protagonist's exaggerated *gongorismo*. Juan, in *Mañanas de abril y mayo*, confirms the snake's venomous breath. He does not want to utter his true suspicions as to why a man was in his Ana's house the previous night: "Pero no quiero / pronunciarlo, por no ser / víbora yo de mi aliento" (OC 1: 599). In both cases the emblematic meaning conveyed is the fragility of honor and reputation. The viper does not need his poison to kill if his breath suffices; honor does not need proof to be tainted.

Calderón's plays also include the superstition that the snake retains its venom intact even when split in two. In both examples cited below, the lore is used as a well-conceived metaphor and perhaps, word emblem, for a "poisonous" letter that has been torn apart. In *No hay burlas con el amor*, Pedro characterizes a shredded letter: "Juntar quiero los pedazos / de esta víbora, esta sierpe / que dividido el veneno / en dos mitades contiene" (OC 1: 505). Lisardo reiterates the same image in *El secreto a voces*: "y he de juntar los pedazos / desta víbora deshecha, / que en su carácter escrito / todo el veneno conserva" (OC 1: 1223). Calderón utilizes a visual image from the natural world, as emblems do, to communicate a meaning not readily apparent: words rashly committed to paper can return to haunt their author, even if the letter was torn to shreds.

Of course, not all beliefs associated with snakes in the plays of Calderón are emblematic, nor are they all debunked by modern science. A fitting irony that recurs in several dramas is that the snake's venom produces both poison and antidote. Veturia, in *Las armas de la hermosura*, avails herself of this phenomenon metaphorically to justify her contradictory actions of clamoring alternately for war and peace: "que no hay víbora, por más / que en flores se disimule, / que no escupa la triaca / contra el veneno que escupe" (OC 2: 970). In *El alcaide de sí mismo*, Margarita utilizes this imagery to characterize an angry woman: "que la mujer es víbora, ofendida, / cuyo rigor, de imperfecciones lleno, / engendra la triaca y el veneno" (OC 1: 876). Other examples are found in OC 1:251, OC 2: 839 & OC 2: 1301.

Calderón also uses snake imagery in his dramas as a basis for more

poetic metaphor. These images do not depend on reader recognition of natural lore or knowledge of snake behavior, but rather on visual associations with the serpent. The stream or river is a favorite serpentine image. *Los empeños de una casa* offers a typical example: "¡Bien hubiese un arroyuelo / que áspid de cristal pisado, / entre unas humildes yerbas / del rústico pie de un árbol, / quiso morder el ribete / de sus adornos, manchando / no sé qué cenefa de oro / con saliva de alabastro!" (OC 1: 1052; see also OC 2: 502 & 2103).

The snake is further exploited by Calderón to depict "pen and sword" in certain metaphors. The association between pen and asp is clarified by Beatriz in *No siempre lo peor es cierto*: "Bien dicen que una cruel / pluma áspid es de ira lleno, / de quien la tinta es veneno / en las hojas del papel" (OC 1: 1459). The snake as "sword" (in reality, a dagger), surfaces in *El mayor monstruo del mundo*, when Aristóbolo grasps a deadly asp and says: "Si otro de metal / dio a Antonio trágico fin, / tú serás vivo puñal / de mi pecho" (OC 2: 464; a similar image referring to an *arpón* is found in OC 2: 1812).

Calderón, in the many plays that employ snake imagery, also depicts the serpent as lightning, a trumpet and the tips of paint brushes. Floripes pronounces the comparison to lightning in *La puente de Mantible*: "¿Quién el relámpago vio, / culebra de fuego, sierpe / de vislumbres escamada, / que el aire ilumina y hiere, / que no previniese el rayo?" (OC 1: 1878). The trumpet similarity is voiced by Circe in *El mayor encanto, amor*, when she asks: "¿Qué bastarda trompa es esta, / áspid de metal, que gime / al aire?" (OC 2: 1543). And, finally, in *Darlo todo y no dar nada*, the famous painter Apeles decries the tools of his trade: "siendo áspides para mí / las puntas de los pinceles, / que entre flores de matices / su mortal veneno vierten" (OC 2: 1050).

The snake in Calderón's secular drama, almost without exception, is an image of danger and evil, even when its natural beauty is conceded as a tragic irony. More than verbal decoration, the serpentine imagery developed by Calderón is often emblematic, in the broadest acceptance of the term: the picture developed by the image, based on popular lore undoubtedly familiar to the audience, subtly expresses a moral concept appropriate to the dramatic situation or character involved. A number of Calderón's snake motifs are also emblematic in a stricter sense: they are found in Spanish emblem and device collections. Whether or not these were his true and unique source,⁸ the use of snake lore in Calderón's secular plays constitutes an effective dramatic strategy for evoking a wealth of moral and pictorial associations with great verbal economy.⁹

● NOTES

¹ Other examples of natural lore that are found in many plays by Calderón de la Barca include: the crocodile who mimics the human voice in order to lure its victims; the sunflower; the unnamed two plants that are each separately a poison, but a medicine when combined; the suckfish (*rémorra*) that acts as an anchor; the pelican that sheds blood from its own breast to nourish its young; the silkworm that weaves its own prison or tomb, and the almond tree that blooms prematurely. Frederick A. de Armas has studied the latter in a pair of articles: "The Flowering Almond Tree: Examples of Tragic Foreshadowing in Golden Age Drama and "Los 'naturales secretos' del almendro en el teatro de Calderón." We might add that the almond tree is also included as an emblem motif in Alonso Remón's *Discursos elógicos y apologéticos* (1627), f. 12 and in Juan Francisco de Villalva's *Empresas espirituales y morales* (1613), f. 71. Calderón uses the motif in at least five plays.

² An overview of critical studies dedicated to the influence of emblematics in Calderón is provided in Cull's "Emblems in the Secular Drama of Calderón de la Barca: A Review Article," forthcoming in *Romance Quarterly*.

³ Other examples from the *Obras completas* include: 1: 449, 1275, 1318, 1418, 1423, 1462, 1507, 1784, 2033 and 2: 39, 706, 761, 860, 872, 1191, 1406 & 1614.

⁴ Virtually the same emblem plate, but with a slightly different meaning, is found in the *Emblemas morales* (1610) of Covarrubias Horozco, f. 193. A much later emblem of the rejuvenating snake is included in Antonio de Lorea's *David pecador, empresas morales, político-cristianas* (1674), 454.

⁵ Emblem motifs of the coiled snake with its tail in its mouth are found in Juan de Borja's *Empresas morales* (1581), 58 & 170.

⁶ For other examples from the *Obras completas*, see: 1: 337, 391, 1878 and 2: 1242.

⁷ Varieties on this theme in the *Obras completas* include: 1: 277, 975, 1134, 1223, 1513, 1738, 1822, 2017 and 2: 222, 230 & 1803.

⁸ The lore conveyed in the emblem books tends to originate in the Bible, mythology and other classical sources. These sources, however, unlike the emblem books, generally do not exploit the lore to convey a deeper meaning. Pliny's *Natural History* was a very popular source for animal lore. Jerónimo Gómez de la Huerta's translation of books 7 and 8 of the *Traducción de los libros de Caio Plinio Segundo, de la historia natural de los animales* appeared in 1599 (Madrid: Luis Sánchez). He added the translation of book 9 in 1603. Gómez de la Huerta's complete translation of the *Natural History* in two volumes appeared in 1624-1629 (Madrid: Luis Sánchez). The natural lore related by Pliny includes the pregnant viper who is a victim of its matricidal snakelings (Book

10, Chap. 82). Another popular source for animal lore were the fables of Æsop. The early, illustrated editions of Æsop's *Fables* are, for all practical purposes, emblem books. They combine a woodcut *pictura* with a verse *subscriptio* and a short, pithy moral, the equivalent of the *inscriptio*. The first Spanish translation was *Esta es la vida del Ysopet con sus fábulas historiadadas...* (Zaragoza: Johan Hurus, 1489). Cronberger published Spanish translations in Seville in 1521, 1526 and 1533. Other sixteenth-century Spanish editions include Toledo: Juan de Ayala, 1547; Madrid: Francisco Sánchez, 1575; Medina del Campo: Francisco del Canto, 1576; Sevilla: Juan de León, 1590. There are also a number of seventeenth-century Spanish translations. The fables that appear to have been adapted as emblem motifs include *The Farmer and the Ungrateful Snake* and *The Pregnant Viper*. Emblematisers and creative writers also had at their disposal a number of encyclopedic works that contain the same anecdotes, although without the moral-didactic meaning ascribed in the emblems. Pedro Mexía, for example, deals extensively with the issue of whether or not baby vipers shred their mother's side in childbirth in his *Silva de varia lección* (II: 80-83). Mexía also explains that the snake with its tail in its mouth is an emblem of time (I: 190-91 & II: 490). Antonio de Torquemada relates an abundance of snake lore in his *Jardín de llores curiosas* (488-92).

⁹ Although this study has concerned itself with snake imagery in the secular drama of Calderón, further examples could be adduced for the Corpus plays. Imagery that is concretely emblematic includes the viper whose side is shredded during childbirth (*Los encantos de la culpa*, OC 3: 421; *El pastor Fido*, OC 3: 1605); the serpent who sheds its skin as an emblem of rebirth (*El año santo de Roma*, OC 3: 500; *El sacro Parnaso*, OC 3: 787; *La lepra de Constantino*, OC 3: 1814); the ungrateful asp or snake warmed at one's bosom (*El año santo en Madrid*, OC 3: 547; *La siembra del Señor*, OC 3: 698; *El primer refugio del hombre y probática piscina*, OC 3: 972; *El nuevo hospicio de pobres*, OC 3: 1201; *La serpiente de metal*, OC 3: 1549; *Los alimentos del Hombre*, OC 3: 1613; *El día mayor de los días*, OC 3: 1645) and the coiled snake as an emblem of time (*El año santo en Madrid*, OC 3: 557). In addition to the emblematic snake imagery, the *autos* provide abundant examples of the other types of snake lore and imagery found in the secular plays.

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Paranormal Subjects in Vallejo and Lezama

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In *El laberinto de la soledad* and *Piedra de sol* (and elsewhere) Octavio Paz posits the idea that the cuts and wounds brought about by the Conquest are Latin America's origin, its birth. According to Paz, there is, therefore, no primordial Latin American wholeness previous to violence and division since in Latin America this division is itself primordial. This thesis faintly recalls, but is not quite in line with the abundant and rich modern tradition of Latin American scholarship (one that extends roughly from José Martí to Roberto González Echeverría) that has considered the question of the Latin American self in terms of lost origins. True, the two paradigms—that of Paz, that of the lost origin—begin with separation (and therefore with pain). But whereas studies concerned with lost origins grow out of the conviction that the Latin American subject has been cut off from his/her roots, authenticity or wholeness (due, of course, to the colonial situation), Paz' work is grounded on the cut itself—not on the separation from the origin but on separation as the origin. For Paz division is the defining characteristic and the foundational component of the Latin American experience. The attempt to overcome division hence reflects a desire not to recuperate the true Latin American subject but, on the contrary, to erase the very essence of a strictly Latin American position.

Exactly how this split Latin American subject might function as a *subject*, however, is no easy matter. I use the word "subject" in the modern, that is to say, Cartesian sense: as the originary creator, the self that molds the objective world, the agent that builds or assembles his or her own (personal or collective) history or culture. For Descartes this subject is the foundation of all human knowledge and existence and is therefore whole by definition, since it is necessarily on the scene prior to any force that might divide it. Of course, (via psychoanalysis) we have become quite accustomed to talking about "fragmented subjects." Yet it must be acknowledged that this phrase, however commonplace it might be, is a contradiction in terms: in the Western tradition a subject cannot be both split and a subject, both cut by some force and an