



## GENRE AND GENDER IN THE ODES OF MARÍA ROSA DE GÁLVEZ

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María Rosa de Gálvez (1768-1806) is known to us today as Enlightenment Spain's most successful and prolific female playwright. She composed thirteen original dramas and translated at least four plays from French, almost all of them published during her lifetime, with eight pieces performed in the most important Madrid public theaters of the period. She wrote openly about her professional struggles to see her writing published and presented on the stage, defended her work from critics and censors, and dreamed of achieving renown for her art. She was especially proud of her work as a composer of original tragedies, neoclassicism's highest literary form, as she explains in the "Advertencia" to the second volume of her *Obras poéticas* of 1804:

En esta época salen a luz estas tragedias, que son originales, y sea qual fuere su mérito, solo son producción de una muger española: nada hay en ellas traducido, nada hay tomado sino de la historia o suceso que ha dado asunto al drama. ("Advertencia," *Obras poéticas* II: 6)

After excusing the potential defects in her tragedies from her lack of formal training as a woman, she concludes that even if her contemporaries judge her work harshly, she still holds out hope that literary history will be kind to her and her work:

Estoy bien segura de que la posteridad no dexará acaso de dar algún lugar en su memoria a este libro, y con esto al menos quedarán en parte premiadas las tareas de su autora. ("Advertencia," *Obras poéticas* II: 8)

These two elements —genre and gender— are defining characteristics that María Rosa de Gálvez set out for herself as a dramatist to mark her contributions to eighteenth-century Spanish theater, and are what modern critics, like myself, have mainly studied of her (see Lewis). But curiously, the first of the three volumes of her collected works begins not with the genre of drama so associated with her, but rather with thirteen lyrical poems, the first eight of those specifically identified by the author herself as odes, on a variety of subjects from celebrating political figures and great military victories to contemplating intimate garden spaces. In the introduction to this

first volume, Gálvez refers again to gender and genre, yet in a different way than when speaking of her dramatic works:

Las poesías líricas impresas en este tomo son por la mayor parte hijas de las circunstancias; y solo las presento como una prueba de lo que he podido adelantar en este género. Tales quales sean unas y otras, confieso ingenuamente que no es mi ánimo entrar en competencias literarias con los que corren por poetas entre nosotros. Conozco la diferencia que hay entre unos talentos mejorados con el estudio, y una imaginación guiada solo por la naturaleza. ("Advertencia," *Obras poéticas* I: 3)

Gálvez begins this volume with the humility and self-deprecation that women authors so often employed, but that she herself rarely expressed, or that she expressed in qualified ways, as seen in her comments introducing the aforementioned second volume of her *Obras poéticas*. But why? And why, if she thought that her greatest contribution to Spanish letters was in the theater, did she begin her "Poetical Works" with this particular collection of lyrical poems?

Ralph Cohen has written about the return to the ode in eighteenth-century poetry, an "attempt to bring back poetry into its right channel" (Joseph Warton, quoted in Cohen 203). Two classical ode models dominated—the celebratory Pindaric ode and the more introspective Horatian ode. In eighteenth-century British poetry, the ode appealed to a "propensity for public poetry celebrating political events and heroes" (Koehler 388). As a genre, it held a "middle ground," below tragedy and the epic, but above comedy and satire. It also was a form considered free enough to allow for a wide variety of expressions (Koehler 388). British poets incorporated into their odes "the creation of imagined worlds, experiments with meter and rhyme, the insistence of the musical or song character of the ode, and the impassioned praise of poets and their view of poetry" (Cohen 220).

The ode also had a resurgence in the eighteenth century in Spain. Ignacio de Luzán, in his 1737 book *La poética*, cites various classical ode writers, including Anacreon, Sappho, Pindar and Horace. Nicolás Fernández de Moratín was one of the first of his generation to compose celebratory Pindaric odes, possibly inspired by the re-publication in 1761 of Fray Luis de Leon's translations of Pindar, and in turn influencing younger poets like José Cadalso and Juan Meléndez Valdés, who took up the genre only to move quickly on by the 1780's to a new poetry that was in the words of John H.R. Polt, "más moderno, más romántico" and more inspired by sources like Edward Young (Polt 313; Gies 71-124). Spanish women were writing odes in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries too. María Gertrudis Hore (1742-1801), for example, classified a number of her poems as "odas," "anacreónticas," and the related forms "canciones" and "silvas." Still, no other eighteenth-century woman writer seems to cultivate the ode so deliberately as a genre as did María Rosa de Gálvez. In the first volume of

her *Obras poéticas* she presents victory odes in the Pindaric style much like Moratín, Cadalso, and Meléndez Valdés had done before her: the opening poem of her volume “La campaña de Portugal” celebrates the 1801 military victory of her benefactor Manuel Godoy; “Las campañas de Bonaparte en Italia” celebrates Napoleon Bonaparte; even the second poem of the collection, “La Beneficencia: Oda a la Excelentísima Señora Condesa de Castroterreño,” exalts the poet’s own cousin (María Josefa de Gálvez y Valenzuela, Countess of Castroterreño) and the charitable work of the ladies of the Junta de Damas. Other odes are more introspective and philosophical in nature, such as the “Descripción filosófica del Real Sitio de San Ildefonso” dedicated to her friend and fellow poet Manuel Quintana. In addition to the odes published in this volume, Gálvez published three others: “Viage al Teyde” (1805), “En elogio de las fumigaciones en Morvó” (1806), and “En Elogio de la Marina Española” (1806).

Four odes from the first volume of the *Obras poéticas* stand out in particular: “La campaña de Portugal: oda al Excmo. Señor Príncipe de la Paz,” “La Poesía. Oda a un amante de las artes de imitación,” “Descripción filosófica del Real Sitio de San Ildefonso. Oda a Don Manuel Quintana,” and “A Don Manuel Quintana en elogio de su Oda al océano.” These poems, which are dedicated to two men who were important to Gálvez’s career — the powerful politician and patron of the arts Manuel Godoy and the rising young intellectual star Manuel José Quintana— underscore again the importance of genre and gender for María Rosa de Gálvez in her quest for success, acceptance, and recognition as an artist. The celebratory style of the neoclassic ode connected Gálvez and her work to these influential men, elevating along with her subjects her own status as artist. And yet Gálvez’s odes were more than mere attempts at self-promotion and favor seeking, as they also explored her own thinking on topics ranging from art to friendship.

María Rosa de Gálvez was the adopted daughter and only child of a lesser-known brother (Antonio) of the well-connected Gálvez family. Her uncle Matías and cousin Bernardo de Gálvez served as viceroys of Mexico. Another uncle, José de Gálvez (Marquis of Sonora), also held important posts with Carlos III’s court including as Inspector General of Nueva España (Mexico) and later in the Council of the Indies in Madrid (Bordiga Grinstein 12). Her aunt María de la Concepción Valenzuela y Fuentes (Marquise of Sonora and wife of José de Gálvez) and her cousin María Josefa de Gálvez y Valenzuela (Countess of Castroterreño, and daughter of José de Gálvez) were both members of the prestigious Junta de Damas (Martín-Valdepeñas 170). In 1789 at the age of 21, María Rosa de Gálvez married José Cabrera. The couple had a daughter together who died in infancy, and they separated in 1794, although their troubled relationship continued until her death in 1806 (Bordiga Grinstein 2003, Martín-Valdepeñas 2017).

María Rosa de Gálvez also had good friends in high places including fellow writers Rita Barrenechea, Nicasio Álvarez de Cienfuegos, and Manuel José Quintana, as well the powerful Manuel Godoy (Doménech, 68). Gálvez

describes the importance of these close relationships in several poems published in volume one of her *Obras poéticas*, beginning her collection celebrating perhaps the most important of them all, Manuel Godoy. With Godoy's powerful position in the court of Carlos IV, and his influence as an avid patron of the arts, we can imagine that his support was crucial for the publication of her work with the Royal Press, and thus it is understandable why Gálvez would choose to open the first volume of her collected works with a poem celebrating Godoy.

**"La campaña de Portugal: Oda al Excmo. Señor Príncipe de la Paz"**

Manuel Godoy rose quickly in the court of King Carlos IV, holding high government positions and great power from 1792-1808. He was given the title Príncipe de la Paz upon his brokering of a peace treaty with France to end the War of the Pyrenees in 1795. In 1801, at the behest of France and Napoleon, King Carlos and Godoy took on Portugal and the British in the so-called "Guerra de las Naranjas," named for a branch of oranges Godoy gave the Spanish monarchs as a symbol of their victory. This brief war ended more favorably for Spain and Godoy than it did for Napoleon. Although soon Godoy would be disgraced in the Motín de Aranjuez and exiled during the bloody Napoleonic invasion and the Peninsular War that would last from 1808-1814, in 1804, at the time this poem was published, Godoy was still the most powerful and celebrated man in Spain, not only in politics but also in Spanish Enlightenment culture. Godoy had intervened on Gálvez's behalf in the past, notably to help her troubled husband obtain a post in the Spanish embassy in Philadelphia, from which he would later be expelled for forging checks, among other bad behavior (Bordiga Grinstein 30). In 1804, the year of the publication of Gálvez's *Obras*, Godoy was no longer Prime Minister, but nonetheless still a powerful and influential man in King Carlos IV's court.

The brief war with Portugal in the spring of 1801, which lasted a little over two weeks, was a victory for Spain in that they succeeded in getting the Portuguese to renounce their alliance with Great Britain, and managed to preserve their relationship with France, at least in the short term, while avoiding a full-scale French military assault on the Iberian Peninsula. It was also a victory for Godoy, who was able to put some of his military reforms into practice and demonstrate his diplomatic and strategic political prowess, quickly signing a peace treaty that was more favorable to Spain and Portugal than to Napoleon (Esdaile 99). Godoy celebrated his accomplishments by commissioning Francisco Goya to paint his portrait that same year. In it we find Godoy, dressed in a field marshal's uniform as if he is taking his rest after a difficult battle, wearing signs of his important military and political honors. Pinedo and Pérez speak of the figure of the 39-year-old Godoy as "fornido," and point to the juxtaposition of horses and soldiers in the background surrounding Godoy as if "el artista jugase con los cuartos traseros del animal y los muslos del Príncipe [de la Paz]" (101). They also note the psychological details to Goya's depiction of Godoy as "enérgico,

inteligente, capaz de perseguir y alcanzar el poder” (101). Godoy was a devoted art collector, amassing more than a thousand paintings for his personal collection, including Velázquez’s *Venus del espejo* and Goya’s twin paintings the *Maja vestida* and *Maja desnuda*. Janis Tomlinson describes Goya’s portrait of Godoy in this way: “Goya turned the traditional vertical format of the official portrait on its side, to represent Godoy as the contemplative commander” (191).



Francisco Goya, “Portrait of Manuel Godoy”, 1801. Oil on canvas, 180 cm × 267 cm (71 in × 105 in). Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, Madrid.

Godoy, in his memoir published at the end of his life, wrote extensively about his important place in politics, and his promotion of Spain’s Enlightenment reforms in every area from science to the arts. Not surprisingly he mentions Goya, along with other important thinkers and artists he knew and supported in the waning years of Spain’s Enlightenment. But along with his memories of figures like Goya, Jovellanos, Meléndez Valdés, and Quintana, Godoy’s lists of important Spanish artists and thinkers of his time include a few women, among them María Rosa de Gálvez:

Con mayor razón alabaré la concurrencia de algunas damas castellanas, que en aquellos días favorables a las musas, les presentaron sus ofrendas, y ofrendas estimables, cuales fueron, entre muchas que se escapan de mi memoria, [...] las composiciones líricas y dramáticas con que aumentó nuestro Parnaso doña María Rosa Galvez, aplaudida largamente en los teatros, y estimada otro tanto y alentada por nuestros literatos de aquel tiempo. (II, Chapter XLIV: 247-248)

History remembers Godoy as more of a ladies' man than a champion of female artists, a reputation no doubt earned by his open affair with his long-time mistress Pepita Tudó, his rumored affair with Queen María Luisa, and his racy collection of art that included Goya's *maja* paintings. Historian Francisco Guillén Robles was the first to suggest a love affair between María Rosa de Gálvez and Godoy, writing more than six decades after her death that Gálvez "corrió vida azarosa y libertina, viniendo a parar a Madrid a vivir a espensas de Godoy, a quien tenía por costumbre presentar un soneto liviano a la hora de tomar el chocolate" (86). Despite no other record of such an affair, and not a single surviving "soneto liviano," this brief footnote would be repeated by the few literary historians who mention Gálvez over the next century, relegating her presence in the historical record to a small but salacious anecdote in the larger narrative of Manuel Godoy as a corrupt political figure (Bordiga Grinstein 56-57).

Gálvez's ode to Godoy, "La campana de Portugal," was published three years after his victory in Portugal, and four years before he fled Spain to escape the Aranjuez uprising, to live in exile in Italy and later in France, where he died in 1851 (Tomlinson 214). The first part of the poem, addressed to Roman gods of war Mars and Bellona, highlights Godoy's bravery. He defends Spain "impávido y brioso" (line 11) to subdue the "Luso belicoso" (line 10). Quickly enough the poem moves from addressing the Roman gods to addressing Godoy directly, as the "noble caudillo" (line 28). Godoy speaks to his troops: "Si tan Ilustre premio pertenece / (dixo el caudillo) al vencedor brioso, / Nuestro será españoles" (lines 49-51). But then a personified "Peace" speaks to Godoy, the Prince of Peace: "No más horror ni sangre (la Paz clama / desde la esfera al héroe victorioso) / Yo desciendo a la tierra a coronarte / Con el ramo dichoso / de la oliva pacífica;" (lines 77-81). There are no oranges here, only the olive branch of peace, which Gálvez credits to Godoy who brings "descanso a los humanos" (line 95), by ending war and its horrors (line 97). Finally, Gálvez brings herself into the poem "Mi voz canta con ellas" (line 107). It is fitting, she claims, that the "musa hispana," (line 110) —and we may question here if this is some ethereal poetic muse or is it Gálvez herself?— celebrates Godoy through her verse "pues generoso / Proteges de las artes las tareas" (lines 111-112). The closing sentence of the poem reveals her double purpose in celebrating her benefactor: "Yo a tu valor la dulce poesía / Reverente consagro; / ella te ofrece / La gloria de tu patria, que desees / Y en su canto aparece / de tu campaña el triunfo, que en la historia / Hará inmortal tu nombre y mi memoria" (lines 115-120).

These two celebrations through art and poetry of the same man and the same event reveal the interconnected nature of politics and the arts in the figure of Manuel Godoy. Goya's commissioned portrait perhaps showed Godoy as he wanted to be remembered —handsome, triumphant, powerful. Yet, there is a hint of irony in Goya's portrayal: the juxtaposition of the animals and soldiers compared to the relaxed confidence of the reclining Prince of Peace, who gazes at the viewer, not unlike the clothed and nude

majas Godoy had also commissioned from Goya. In contrast, there is no irony in Gálvez's celebration of Godoy, only admiration and praise. Opening the first volume of her *Obras poéticas* with this none-too-subtle poem celebrating the most important benefactor of the arts in Spain at the time seems a strategic move on Gálvez's part. Although in the *Advertencia* to this volume, Gálvez called her poems "hijas de las circunstancias" and she claims not to want to enter into "competencias literarias con los que corren por poetas entre nosotros" she ends her opening poem to the volume hoping to achieve immortality with it: "Hará inmortal tu nombre y mi memoria." Perhaps the ultimate irony of both Godoy's commissioned portrait and of Gálvez's poem was that in the end, neither Godoy would be remembered for his military victory in Portugal, nor Gálvez for her poem celebrating it.

### **"La Poesía. Oda a un amante de las artes de imitación"**

"La Poesía. Oda a un amante de las artes de imitación," the fourth poem in this volume, was also dedicated to Godoy. In it, Gálvez continues to seek recognition as an artist as she expressed at the end of "La campaña de Portugal," seeking to ensure her name is written in what she calls the "glorious temple of fame" ("Mi genio aspira a verse colocado en el glorioso templo de la fama" (lines 131-132), alongside Western tradition's most recognized poets whom she lists throughout the poem: Homer, Horace, Ovid, Virgil, but also Sappho and Corinna, and more contemporary examples such as Corneille, Voltaire, Antoinette Deshoulières, and Salomon Gessner. Two concepts—imitation, and nature—are key to our understanding of this poem and of Gálvez's larger poetic project, connecting her not only to the great poets of the past, but also placing her among her contemporaries who were transitioning away from the rigid models of neoclassicism towards new models of expression. Running through her poem, quite literally, are images of rivers—the Seine, the Thames, and Spain's own Tagus. Her poetry, like the Tagus itself, begins as a trickling spring, and progresses along its course into a rushing river cascading toward the sea, a metaphor for her career as an artist.

In this second poem dedicated to Godoy, the lover of poetry, Gálvez describes poetry as "el arte imitadora / de la música hermana / y del alma sensible encantadora" (lines 8-10). Joaquín Álvarez Barrientos, who has studied the concept of imitation throughout the Spanish eighteenth century, finds that while at the beginning of the century imitation was "el resultado de copiar un modelo literario antiguo, avalado por la tradición" (222), by the end of the century, changes in the scientific and philosophical understandings of experience, as well as economic and social changes that brought about the bourgeoisie and the professional artists who wrote for them, sparked a privileging of "ingenio" (ingenuity) over "arte" and of imitation as representation of contemporary experience over emulation of tradition (221). In her poem, Gálvez sets out to fulfill that original idea of the "art of imitation": that is to imitate the great poets of the past, extolling "la ciencia

de Helicon" (line 14) and spreading "los resonantes metros de la Hesperia" (line 16), and yet she also highlights her own "ingenio" as a poet in her representation of nature.

From the ancients to Renaissance and contemporary European writers, both male and female, Gálvez describes a long line "genios de imitación" (line 36), and those who were "émulas de su triunfo" (line 57), mentioning them by name (Homer, Virgil, Tasso, Corneille, Racine, Voltaire, Horace, Ovid, Gessner, Sappho, Corinna), and by tradition (Greek, Roman, Italian, English, French, Spanish). Gálvez herself joins this line of imitators and emulators: "Mi lira cantará; y arrebatada/En noble emulación sus huellas sigo" (lines 107-109). Claudia Gronemann points out the connection between Gálvez's poem on poetry—the art of imitation—and Horace's *Ars poetica*, and finds that she has "the same double purpose as Horace": praising her benefactor both to emphasize the prestige of literature and to promote her own reputation as a poet (see Gronemann).

Imitation of images of nature from classical and contemporary poets appear throughout Gálvez's poem: there is the wind that spreads "resonantes metros" (line 16), or the peak of Mount Parnassus, the mythical home of poets (line 34). The naming of several rivers in particular evoke the eternal flow of classical tradition among European poets, where after "siglos de ignorancia" during the middle ages, poets throughout Europe returned to the Classics: the unnamed "hijos del Támesis undoso" (line 64), the named French writers Corneille, Racine, Voltaire and Crebillon on "la margen del Sena" (line 73), as well as the writers of Spain's Golden Age, the "hijos del Tajo" (87). But even those who imitate these great models can add new meaning. Gálvez praises eighteenth-century Swiss poet Salomon Gessner who builds on previous models by portraying "de natura el rico manto" (line 82) giving its meadows "nuevo ser y brillo" (84). Women too were part of this line of emulators and innovators: Corinna and Sappho, followed by French salonnière Antoinette Deshoulières.

Gálvez describes her own poetic calling as "noble emulación" (line 109) of great writers, and she names poetry as her "feliz elección, grato consulo / De mis inmensos males" (lines 111-112). She compares her verse to a river that begins as a "fuente cristalina" (line 118), whose "humildes raudales / Aspira a llegar al Océano / Cayendo de los montes depesñada. / Girando por el llano, / Corriendo entre colinas desiguales, / Las rocas evitando apresurada, / Hasta que en la cascada / Del soberbio torrente impetuosos / Sus aguas junta, el curso facilita, / Y al ancho mar con el se precipita" (lines 119-128). "Así mi verso" she states (line 129), and like the rushing river, the force of her poetry is able to defeat envy "y el temor desprecian" (line 130).

In "La Poesía. Oda a un amante de las artes de imitación" María Rosa de Gálvez seeks recognition for herself and her poetry—"Mi genio aspira a verse colocado / En el glorioso templo de la fama" (lines 131-132) she exclaims. She attempts to achieve recognition with this poem by joining the eternal flow of great poetry and emulating models of the past, but also by

aligning herself with the powerful and influential Manuel Godoy, her memory “de este modo unida” with his (lines 137-138). Godoy not only was a lover of the arts, he also could help artists publish their work, or produce their plays on the public stage.

While in the introduction to her collection María Rosa de Gálvez claims to only have “natural” and not cultivated talent, she makes the argument for herself in this and other poems as being quite cultured, a student of the great poets of the past capable of emulating them, and maybe even lending new meaning and brilliance. Gálvez, like her contemporaries, sought to make a living with her art, and like the writers Álvarez Barrientos studied, she was part of the same transition away from Neoclassicism’s strict emulation of classical models and towards new models of representation that would appeal to contemporary readers. Nature and imitation are united in this poem in the image of the river, which becomes an image of both emulation —of the continuity of the flow of great poetry through the ages— but also of Gálvez’s natural talent, and becomes a metaphor in support her self-promotion as a poet worthy of taking her place alongside the great poets of the past and future.

**“Descripción filosófica del Real Sitio de San Ildefonso. Oda a Don Manuel Quintana” and “A Don Manuel Quintana en elogio de su Oda al océano”**

Manuel José Quintana (1772-1857) was four years younger than María Rosa de Gálvez, and in the early 1800s was just beginning to establish his career as a lawyer in Madrid, even as he gained notoriety with his poetry. He had not yet staged his famous historical drama *Pelayo* (1805) nor had he published his celebration of Francisco Balmis’s quest to spread the smallpox vaccine through the Spanish Empire (“Oda a la expedición española para propagar la vacuna en América,” 1808) —both of which became classics of Spain’s short-lived Enlightenment movement. Quintana went on to be a notable liberal thinker and politician whose political, philosophical, and literary influence would span generations. Among his many literary accolades, he was inducted into the Spanish Royal Academy in 1814 at 41 years of age, and crowned poet laureate by Isabel II in 1855 at the age of 83. A champion of liberalism, he was instrumental in the creation of Spain’s first constitution in 1812, and active in the ups and downs of Spanish politics throughout the first half of the nineteenth century —at times holding high government positions and also exiled for a period.

María Rosa de Gálvez dreamt of achieving such lasting notoriety as her friend Quintana. Despite her declared reticence to compete with other poets, as she had expressed in the introduction to this first volume of her *Obras*, she dedicated two of her poems to the young, up-and-coming poet. Quintana returned the favor and reviewed her *Obras poéticas* the next year in his journal *Variedades de Ciencias, Literatura, y Artes*. In his review, he declares that Gálvez

was too modest, praises her "modo de pensar noble y elevado" (162) and concludes that surely Gálvez will achieve what she so wanted—lasting fame:

De todos modos nuestra literatura, que entre las mugeres que se habían dedicado a componer versos, no contaba sino escritoras de coplas, puede desde ahora darse el parabien de tener un talento que al interés que llama hacia sí su sexo, reúne el mérito de haber producido un buen número de rasgos verdaderamente poéticos, que no solo le harán respetable mientras viva, sino que pasarán su nombre a la posteridad. (164)

But María Rosa de Gálvez died a year later, at the age of thirty-eight, and was all but forgotten until the last decades of the twentieth century, while Quintana lived, and was celebrated as a great poet and statesman for another 50 years.

The first ode dedicated to Quintana in the volume, "Descripción filosófica del Real Sitio de San Ildefonso. Oda a Don Manuel Quintana," follows the poem to Godoy "La Poesía. Oda a un amante de las artes de imitación." Set in the gardens of the Royal Palace at San Ildefonso, also known as *La Granja*, this ekphrastic poem criticizes art's imitation of nature. Built in 1724 by the first Spanish Bourbon monarch Felipe V in the mountains near Segovia about 50 miles from Madrid, *La Granja* was the summer palace for the Bourbons throughout the eighteenth and into the mid nineteenth century. It has been described as the Spanish Versailles, and is known for its formal gardens and for the engineering and beauty of its exquisite fountains. Under Carlos III, buildings to house and support the entourage of nobles, officials, and servants were added to the nearby village (Rodríguez Ruiz 71). While we do not know exactly why Gálvez would have been at the palace, we can imagine that she could have been there in the company of her extended family, who were titled nobles with high social positions. However, far from describing Ildefonso as an idyllic place of beauty and recreation, the poet complains of being surrounded in these gardens by "maliciosa gente" (line 6) who are "llena de orgullo, de ambición henchida" (lines 8). Even nature is trapped, oppressed by art: "Gime en estos jardines suntuosos / Por el arte oprimida, / Destruye su belleza / En formas y dibuxos monstruosos" (lines 15-18). Art's attempt to imitate and contain nature, expressed in the marble and bronze of the palace's famous fountains<sup>1</sup>, at first captivate the poet, but they pale in comparison to the beauty and the awesome power of nature: "Yo ví desde mi albergue al alto monte / Coronar el nublado ennegrecido / Vi, que el celeste fuego / Alumbra el horizonte: / Lejano el trueno penetró mi oído" (lines 66-70). She urges her friend to come quickly: "Quintana, vuela" (line 79), and ease her mind. Unlike the artificial

<sup>1</sup> Gálvez describes in detail a different royal fountain at the palace at Aranjuez in another poem in the same volume: "Descripción de la Fuente de la Espina en el Real Sitio de Aranjuez."

and corrupt people surrounding the court's summer palace, she speaks of her friend Quintana's "agradable genio" (line 83) and his "sublime acento" (line 85), "sensible y sano" (line 87). Theirs is a friendship of the mind, and instead of limiting or oppressing, this friendship restores: "Volvieras el verdor a los prados mustíos" (line 88). Gálvez yearns in her poem for a more authentic connection between art, nature, and her relationships with the people around her. These are topics she will develop more in her second poem dedicated to Quintana, "A Don Manuel Quintana en elogio de su Oda al océano."<sup>2</sup>

Both Quintana's ode "Al mar" (1802), and Gálvez's ode celebrating it, marvel at the beauty of nature's sublime power. Both poets use the awe-inspiring power of the sea to consider its significance to natural and human power, each contemplating the sublime as they explore the significance of earthly and other-worldly powers. Beginning in the late seventeenth century, thinkers from Boileau to Kant began to use the sublime as a way to explore the complex, and sometimes negative emotions stirred by the awesome power of nature. Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant contrasted the sublime to the beautiful, and both associated the sublime with masculinity, and the beautiful with femininity. In his 1764 *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, Kant states that women are associated with beauty, and men with the sublime, but not exclusively: "Here it is not to be understood that woman is lacking noble qualities or that the male sex must entirely forego beauties; rather one expects that each sex will unite both, but in such a way that in a woman all other merits should only be united so as to emphasize the character of the beautiful, which is the proper point of reference, while by contrast among the male qualities the sublime should clearly stand out as the criterion of his kind" (35).

Discussions of the sublime were not as prevalent in Spanish eighteenth-century works on esthetics. The most influential among them, Luzán's 1737 *Poética* (which came out decades before Burke and Kant) puts forward ideas on the sublime as related to artistic style from Longinus, probably through Boileau's 1674 French translation (Checa Beltrán 134). Still, more recent ideas on the sublime from Britain, France, and Germany circulated in Spanish newspapers and books in the second half of the eighteenth century, including various translations of Burke, Reynolds, Beattie, and Hugh Blair. This latter author appears to have had special resonance with Quintana (Valero 589). Valero finds in Quintana's writings before the Peninsular War and the Spanish War of Independence a confrontation between republican ideals and notions of benevolence and sensibility (587-588). In Quintana's writings these two orientations stood in for the gendered contrapositions of the sublime and the beautiful found in Burke, Kant and others, with Quintana's preference for stoic civic virtue associated with the masculine (Valero 588).

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<sup>2</sup> While Gálvez refers to Quintana's poem as "Oda al océano," Quintana's published title is "Al mar."

While Valero finds evidence of a moral or civic sublime in Quintana's works *Las reglas del drama* (1791), *Poesías selectas castellanas desde el tiempo de Juan de Mena a nuestros días* (1807), and his ode to the hero of the failed sixteenth-century revolt of the *comuneros* Juan de Padilla (in *Poesías patrióticas*, 1808), Quintana's poem *Al mar*, published in his first collection *Poesías* in 1802, uses the sublimity of the awesome and destructive powers of the sea to explore questions of human empire and heroism.

The first stanza directly addresses the sea: "Calma un momento tus soberbias ondas / Océano inmortal, y no a mi acento, / Con eco turbulento / Desde tu seno líquido respondas (lines 1-4). The poet speaks of leaving Madrid's humble Manzanares river for "playas remotas del occidente / Corrí desde el humilde Manzanares, / Por contemplar tu gloria" (lines 9-11), which would seem to place him in Galicia and Spain's Atlantic coast. This physical location at the sea's edge stands in contrast to previous wanderings in his fantasy to other awe-inspiring places in nature that he knows only through literature: Mount Olympus's "eterna pirámide" (line 20) and "Etna mugidor", with its "ardiente laba" (line 23) caused trembling in the poet, but pale in comparison to the anxiety he feels facing the sea's wide horizon. Quintana marvels at the immensity of the sea, its endless power. He questions whether the sea was destined to bind and secure the earth ("ceñir y asegurar la tierra," line 42) or destroy it ("hacerle guerra," line 43)? It engulfs and destroys "playas, imperios y hombres infelices" (line 76). Natural, mythic, and human empires come into conflict as Quintana's musings travel from the seashore to the explorations of Vasco de Gama, Christopher Columbus and James Cook. These men of action take on the sea, as they "vuela, rompe, y le sorprende" (line 121), "busca atrevido" (line 125) and "romper los yelos" (128) of the sea. Quintana finds "Gloria eterna" (line 132) in their explorations that united east to west and north to south (138-140) and enriched the earth (line 136), but also "vil codicia" (151) and the man-made power in war that burns angrily ("ardiendo en ira," line 162). The poet ultimately calls on the sea to devour man's warships (182) so that "tal vez así la discordia el fuego / No osará profanar el Océano, / Tal vez el orbe dormirá en sosiego" (lines 183-184).

Gálvez begins her poem contemplating not a real ocean or mountain, but rather seeking her own poetic ambitions at the summit of a symbolic Pindo, which could be the Greek mountain range, but is also the name of a mountain in Galicia on the Atlantic, thus connecting her to Quintana's poem at the edge of the Atlantic. Six lines in, with references to Apollo and Parnassus, there is no doubt that Gálvez is seeking to climb more symbolic poetic spaces. Apollo responds to her that she needs to follow Quintana's example who used the sea, and the ancients to "Celebra al hombre, que en el cielo arranca / El rumbo al polo, y a la ignota gente / Lleva el comercio con fecunda mano" (lines 29-31) and criticize man's ambition —his "Odio y codicia"— which lead to "Estrago y guerra" (lines 34-35). In Gálvez's poem, Quintana's words are sublime, and spark fear in the sea: "Vieras Neptuno,

cuando oyó su canto / Hundir medroso la arrugada frente / En el abismo de su inmenso golfo” (lines 40-42). Apollo chastises Amira (Gálvez’s poetic voice) urging her to forget her attempt to equal Quintana, and instead “con nuevo estudio” (line 47) to improve her poetry. But in the end she still wants the god of poetry’s favor: “Pero yo en tanto tu favor imploro” (54).

Gálvez makes a point to classify her poem at the beginning as “versos sáficos” which on the surface could merely be a reference to the poem’s formal qualities of 11 syllable lines, but certainly she also wanted to connect herself to this most famous of women poets, the subject and eponymous heroine of her one-act drama *Safo* published in the second volume of her *Obras poéticas*. Barbara Claire Freeman reminds us that Sappho was the only female poet mentioned by Longinus in his treatise *On the sublime* which would have been known to Quintana, and perhaps even to Gálvez through Boileau’s 1674 translation to French. Longinus admired Sappho’s “ability to harmonize differences” and “make a unity of them” (Freeman 13). Gálvez, through the voice of Apollo, praises a similar quality in Quintana to conquer the seas with his verse. Could it be that she too wanted to conquer, or harmonize, with her verse?

Both Gálvez and Quintana use sublime images of the immense power of the sea that batters the coast and tosses and devours ships to both admire and critique empires. For Quintana the feats of the great explorers of Empire—Vasco da Gama, Christopher Columbus, and James Cook—turned from “abundosa fuente / de amistad y de unión” (lines 147-148) to “de estragos y violencias / Perenne manantial” (lines 149-150). But Gálvez admires not the sublime power of nature as much as the awesome power of Quintana’s poetry “Honor y gloria de la musa hispana” (line 50).

Barbara Freeman reminds us that traditionally the sublime has been viewed as “a more or less explicit mode of domination [...] a struggle for mastery between opposing powers” (2). Yet, from Sappho on there has been another representation of the sublime, a “feminine sublime” that “takes up a position of respect in response to an incalculable otherness” (Freeman 11). In the wide array of novels that Freeman studies from Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* to Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, the textual and political practice of the feminine sublime “opens language to the necessary task of giving voices to those who have been silenced and finds words for the silence within speech that language cannot say” (12). María Rosa de Gálvez would also give voice to those who were silenced and find words for the silence in many of her plays, as she confronted immense and overwhelming contemporary social and political topics from slavery (in *Zinda*), to rape (in *Florinda*), to domestic abuse (in *El egoísta*), to free love (in *Safo*). But first she needed to scale a metaphorical literary mountain and take in the powerful crashing waves of her friend Quintana’s verses. Her dreams of reaching the summit of the mythical Parnassus along with her friend challenge a sort of Empire of Letters to which the gods seemed unwilling to admit her.

### Conclusion: Gender and poetic genre

We have seen in these four poems the various ways that María Rosa de Gálvez used one of the most elevated poetic genres of her time, the ode. These particular odes, addressed to two men who were important to her success as an artist, reveal the interplay of gender and genre in her writing. As a woman writer, she needed the approval and support of influential men like Godoy and Quintana to see her work published, produced, accepted, and respected. And although she claimed only to possess an unpolished natural talent, lacking “talento mejorado por el estudio” that male poets had, she displays in her use of the classical ode not only her deep knowledge of poetic tradition, but also her understanding of contemporary aesthetic and philosophical trends. Through these four odes celebrating these two men — one an established and powerful politician and the other a budding young poet and political thinker— we see that María Rosa de Gálvez and the poetic and dramatic texts that she wrote could not have been mere “daughters of circumstance.” Rather, we can see reflected in her writings and the ideas she expressed in them her interaction with the highest cultural and intellectual circles of her time, as well as her desire to make her mark as a woman writer on them.<sup>3</sup>

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