

## THE COLONIAL SUBJECT AND THE CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE OTHER<sup>1</sup>

Around 1548, the first viceroy of New Spain, Don Antonio de Mendoza, counselled his successor on how to interpret the relationship which existed between the opinions most commonly expressed about the Amerindian, and those who held such opinions:

Some will tell you that the Indians are simple and humble, that neither malice nor arrogant pride reign among them and that they have no greed; others, on the contrary, will say that they are very rich and that they are vagabonds who refuse to work the fields: Don't believe those of either opinion, but rather treat them as any other people without making special rules..., because few there are in these parts who are not moved by some type of self-interest, either for temporal or spiritual gain, or passion or ambition, or vice or virtue.<sup>2</sup>

The historic words of the viceroy are relevant to this literary discussion on two points: first, the judgment of the character of the Amerindian depended on who made it and for what reason, and, second, behind the characterizations stood notions about how the Amerindian should be treated.

In contrast to the discussions which take the image of the Indian as an isolated object of analysis, I would like to consider—and this suggestion is implicit in Mendoza's observation—the image of the Amerindian and the European as products of the networks of relations established between them. Homi K. Bhabha has argued that the tendency of the colonial subject (be this the colonizer or the colonized) is to see the members of the other group or culture as different, but with differences which are perfectly visible, knowable, and transparent.<sup>3</sup> The notion of such a paradox of difference and similarity can be productive and deserves to be put to the test. It seems to me that the paradox is explained by the fact that difference

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was read at "Writing Ethnography in Latin America: A Symposium," organized by Professors Mercedes López-Baralt and Ricardo Gutiérrez Mouat, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, April 23, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> "Algunos dirán a V.S. que los indios son simples y humildes, que no reina malicia ni soberbia en ellos y que no tienen cobdicia; otros, al contrario, que están muy ricos y que son bagabundos o que no quieren sembrar: no crea a los unos ni a los otros sino trátese con ellos como con cualquiera nación sin hacer reglas especiales, teniendo respecto a los medios de los terceros, porque pocos hay que en estas partes se muevan sin algún interese, ora sea de bienes temporales o espirituales, o pasión o ambición, ora sea vicio o virtud." *Instrucciones que los virreyes de Nueva España dejaron a sus sucesores*, México, 1867, p. 233. Translations of this and all other Spanish-language texts quoted herein are my own.

<sup>3</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, "The other question: difference, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism," *Literature, Politics, and Theory*, ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Margaret Iversen, and Diane Loxley, London, Methuen, 1986, p. 156.

is the product of observation, but that similarity and analogy are set forth in the moment of resolving the dilemma about how to deal with the other. In the last analysis the task of defining the **character** of the other stems from the necessity to define or justify the subject's **treatment** of the other.

To conceptualize and describe Amerindian humanity in the sixteenth century, the European colonial subject relied on certain discursive families<sup>4</sup> whose referents were particular social categories or specific ethnic groups and which facilitated methods and materials for comparison. Although these discourses were not used consciously as models for Indianist discourse, they offered certain commonplaces through which entities and experiences considered as distant by the colonial subject could be contemplated. This is not a question of the direct and immediate observation of reality on the part of a subject, but rather the directed observation mediated by that subject's experience with other discourses.

The concept of the colonial subject which I propose is the following: The colonial subject, as sender and receiver of discourses, is defined not according to who one is, but by how one sees. The issue is the vision which is presented, and in order to approach it, I make reference to the concept of focalization created by Mieke Bal: the relationship between the vision presented, the agent who sees, the one who communicates it, and that which is seen.<sup>5</sup> To this network of relations, I would add, for the explicitly colonial situation, one more element: that of the relationship that the agent who sees and speaks has established or desires to establish with the other. In this way we prevent the vision, created and communicated by a specific agent, from being understood as neutral, universal, or innocent.<sup>6</sup> Instead of contemplating a universal subject, here we focus on "a real subject, endowed with alterity."<sup>7</sup> The one who sees and speaks becomes the subject when that individual's ideas and observations are converted into fixed forms (writing, graphic production, etc.) accessible to others. Once transmitted, these conceptualizations and the interpretations made by their receivers have a life of their own. Thus, the subject is related only loosely to the author who brought that subject into existence.

In the sixteenth century, the Hispanic colonial subject (representing either the perspective of the colonizer or the colonized) commonly produced discourses that

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<sup>4</sup> I employ here the concepts of discursive classification of Walter D. Mignolo, "Cartas, crónicas y relaciones del descubrimiento y la conquista," *Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana, I. Época colonial*, coord. Luis Íñigo Madrigal, Madrid, Cátedra, 1982, pp. 57-58.

<sup>5</sup> Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* [1980], trans. Christine van Boheemen, Toronto, University of Toronto, 1985, pp. 100-104.

<sup>6</sup> We recall Roland Barthes' analysis of the ideological production that presents itself as though it were the simple naked truth (*Mitologías* [1957], trad. Héctor Schmucler, México, Siglo XXI, 1980, p. 218).

<sup>7</sup> Although in a different context, I employ the concept suggested by Professor Eugenio Coseriu in his lecture "El español de América y la unidad del idioma," Primer Simposio de Filología Iberoamericana, University of Seville, Seville, Spain, March 26, 1990.

reflected the values of Christian chivalric culture. For this reason, we may call "chivalric" the discourse that defines alterity in that era. Although the epoch of chivalry had disappeared with the Renaissance invention of modern military technology, the chivalric spirit continued to flourish.<sup>8</sup> In the literature of the sixteenth century, chivalric discourse manifested itself, in my view, in two main discursive types: epic poems (among them, the celebrations of the New World conquests) and the novels of chivalry.

With respect to the Indies, we usually think about the presence of the chivalric by remembering the hypothesis of Professor Irving A. Leonard in *The Books of the Brave*, in which he postulated a relationship between the conquistadores' reading of the books of chivalry and their own soldierly aspirations and actions.<sup>9</sup> The relationship which I am going to draw between chivalric discourse and that concerning the Indies is different. Whereas Professor Leonard was interested in the Spanish conquistador, I am interested in the Amerindian in relationship to the Spaniard. Thus, the epic permits us to consider the relationship between discussions of the Amerindian as a warrior with other discourses about groups dominated by the Castilian knight or soldier. On the other hand, the books of chivalry permit us to set forth the relationship between Indianist discourse and the didactic discourse of moral instruction, most particularly with respect to its application to the female gender. Another significant discourse of the period, pertinent to the present purpose, is that of political philosophy, which shall serve here to integrate and articulate the other conceptualizations with one another.

The comprehensive theme of these discourses is the culture and practice of war. Thus, with respect to the position of the colonial subject and the cultural

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<sup>8</sup> See Julio Caro Baroja, *Las formas complejas de la vida religiosa (religión, sociedad y carácter en la España de los siglos XVI y XVII)*, Madrid, Akal, 1978.

<sup>9</sup> This idea has been as attractive as impossible to prove, as Professor Leonard himself has acknowledged, in *Los libros del conquistador* [1949], trad. Mario Monteforte Toledo, México, Fondo de Cultural Económica, 1953, (1949: 41, 66, 78). Ida Rodríguez Prampolini had presented similar arguments in *Amadises de América* (México, Junta Mexicana de Investigaciones Históricas, 1948), published the year prior to the appearance of Dr. Leonard's book.

In a recent article, I have proposed another interpretation for the very few references to the books of chivalry, taken from the chronicle of Bernal Díaz del Castillo, which have served as evidence for the thesis (Rodríguez Prampolini, Leonard) that popular literature influenced the attitudes and actions of the conquistadors:

Bernal recalled his own experience as a reader, not as a soldier, in two critical moments of his narrative. The first is when he tried to discover a way to describe the magnificent city of Tenochtitlán to his readers; the second is when he attempted to avoid the boredom and skepticism that they might experience if he were to narrate each and every one of the battles and encounters in which he had participated. In both situations, he mentioned the books of chivalry as a common reference point with his readers. With these books in mind, the reader could compare a splendid city unseen (Tenochtitlán) and a war of infinite battles (that of the conquest of Mexico) with a referent suggested by another reader (the reader-cum-writer Bernal Díaz), with whom one shared similar literary experiences. See Rolena Adorno, "Literary Production and Suppression: Reading and Writing about Amerindians in Colonial Spanish America," *Dispositio*, t. 10, núms. 28-29 (1985), p. 12.

construction of alterity, my principal thesis is the following: The values of military and chivalric culture constituted the standard by which the Europeans on one hand, and the Amerindians on the other, evaluated the intentions, conduct, and merits of the other group. These notions were not presented full-blown immediately after the conquest, but rather developed with ever greater clarity with the passage of time, during the decades following the wars to which they made reference. I would like to chart this conceptualization about alterity along three paths: first, the figure of the Amerindian focalized from a European perspective, within the framework of military and chivalric discourse; second, the figure of the Amerindian, again focalized from a European perspective, as a reader of European discourses and as a creator of "native" ones; third, the Amerindian colonial subject as a producer of historical discourse and focalizer of the colonizing European. I will conclude this discussion with a reflection on the theme signalled at the outset: the apparently paradoxical relationship between alterity and familiarity.

### I. The colonial subject and chivalric discourse

There is no doubt that the values of military and chivalric culture functioned as a frame or filter through which the European figured and evaluated the Amerindian. Especially significant in this context were the interpretations— theoretical, historical, and fictional—about how the Amerindian native acted in the wars of conquest. In the epic, the indigenous figure found most frequently was the vanquished ethnic lord. The notable exception was, of course, the poetic representation of the warriors of Arauco.<sup>10</sup> The unforgettable Araucanian heroes place in relief the absence of such figures in the epic poems concerned with the conquests of Mexico and Peru. With rare exceptions,<sup>11</sup> the indigenous leaders were not painted in individual profile. Instead, in most of these compositions efforts to evangelize the incarcerated lord constituted a minor episode at the conclusion of the narration of a glorious war that brought about his defeat.

What historical echoes are heard in these fictionalizations? We remember the famous words of Francisco López de Gómara to the effect that "the conquests of the Indians began once that of the Muslims was concluded, because Spaniards have always fought against infidels."<sup>12</sup> As a "text read and interpreted," the Amerindian occupied the same slot previously inhabited, in the Christian poetic tradition, by the Muslim. Since the epic celebrated the values of militant Christianity, the source

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Alonso de Ercilla, *La araucana*, ed. Marcos A. Morínigo e Isaías Lerner, Madrid, Castalia, 1983.

<sup>11</sup> I have in mind the Cacique de Tabasco in *Cortés valeroso o la Mexicana* [1588] of Gabriel Lobo Lasso de la Vega and the character of Guatemozin in *El peregrino indiano* [1599] by Antonio de Saavedra Guzmán, according to John Van Horne, "The Attitude toward the Enemy in Sixteenth-Century Spanish Narrative Poetry," *Romanic Review*, t. 16 (1925), p. 360.

<sup>12</sup> Francisco López de Gómara, *Historia general de las Indias* [1552], ed. Jorge Gurria Lacroix, Caracas, Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1979, t. I, p. 8.

of which was the medieval conception of a militancy that opposed “the enemies of Christ,” the idea moved easily from the poetic imitation of the wars against the Muslims and Turks to the interpretation of the wars of conquest in the Indies. Nevertheless, there was a significant historical difference: The long centuries required to reconquer all Castilian lands from the Muslims stood in stark contrast to the swiftness with which the American conquests were carried out.

This difference had a profound resonance in the consideration of how to deal with the subordinated Amerindian. In my view, it was utilized as an important datum to advocate the legal right and moral necessity of submitting the Amerindians to colonial rule. It seems inevitable that the interpretation of the character of a war be determined by the characterization that the protagonist makes of his enemy; at the same time, the characterization of the enemy is used subsequently to justify or condemn that war. At one extreme, the form of aggression of the Amerindian in war, his comportment when victorious or vanquished—because different from that of the European—was devalued and scorned. At the other extreme, that same Amerindian conduct—aggression or its lack—was seen as laudable, as a sign of the valor and bravery or prudent self-restraint. Thus, whether the Amerindian native was characterized by a ferocious aggression or valient self-defense, by cowardice or prudence, that conduct on the field of battle was continuously interpreted as evidence in the debates on how the Indian should be treated. In this manner, we come to understand that the discourse on war was elaborated throughout the decades following the conquests not only to interpret that endeavor but also to propose arguments, through the narrated accounts, about how the vanquished enemy should be governed. The importance of military themes is set forth further on contemplating its later resonance in the writings of the mestizos and Amerindians of the subsequent generations.

In my view, the swiftness of the conquests of Mexico and Peru carried great weight in the theoretical and historical evaluation of the Amerindian peoples. The proof of the importance of the comportment of the Amerindian in war is found, for example, throughout the works of Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, who offers a paradigmatic case. In the *Demócrates segundo, o de las justas causas de la guerra contra los indios*, he contemplated the ease of the defeat of the “cowardly and timid” Mexica (Aztec) forces by the Spaniards. Yet in his history of the conquest of Mexico, he praised the bravery of those same native Mexica warriors. The contradiction between these two portraits is only apparent. In developing a theory of just war, the issue was to select examples (in this case, details of the war) which could illustrate and support the theory. Writing the history of a particular war, on the other hand, required that the author deal with all the available data. What distinguishes one work from the other is intent: the theoretical work justified the war and the history celebrated its victory.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See Angel Losada, “Hernán Cortés en la obra del cronista Sepúlveda,” *Revista de Indias*, t. 8, núms. 31-32 (1948), pp. 127-169; Demetrio Ramos, *Sepúlveda y su crónica indiana en el IV centenario de su muerte*

It is important to remember that Sepúlveda was a theorist of war and not of cultural differences. He wrote three treatises on war: 1) a discourse to Charles V on the necessity of making war against the Turks (1529); this was a response to Luther's position on the right to make war against that enemy; 2) a treatise on the compatibility of war and the Christian religion (1533); and 3) his most well-known work, the *Demócrates segundo* (1545), written by request of the president of the Council of the Indies.<sup>14</sup>

In the latter work, one of the virtues that Sepúlveda considered characteristic of the Spanish during the conquest of Mexico—but which the Mexica soldiers lacked—was courage. The valor of the Spanish warrior was praised from Numancia to the wars of Carlos V.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, he considered that the Indians lacked not only bravery but prudence and good judgement as well. He described how the Mexica fled from the Spaniards, “being so cowardly and timid that they could hardly resist the hostile presence of our men:” “many times thousands and thousands of them dispersed, fleeing like women on being defeated by a number of Spaniards so small that they barely reached one hundred.”<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, he claimed that, before the arrival of the Spaniards, the Mexica and their neighbors, “made war among themselves so continuously and with such rage that they considered the victory empty if they did not satisfy their prodigious appetites with the flesh of their enemies.”<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that feminine cowardliness and ferocious cruelty were seen as complementary comportments. Savage ferocity and cowardice were interpreted as two manifestations of the same phenomenon: allowing appetite to dominate over reason, violence to triumph over peace, savagery to reign over gentleness.<sup>18</sup>

According to Sepúlveda, this lack of virtue on the part of the Mexica revealed itself most vividly in war:

And thus Cortés held oppressed and terrorized, at the beginning and over many days, only with the help of such a small number of Spaniards and so few indigenous warriors, a multitude so immense that it gave the impression that they [the Aztecs] lacked not only

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1573-1973, Valladolid, Seminario Americanista de la Universidad de Valladolid y Excmo. Ayuntamiento de Pozoblanco, 1976, pp. 123-137.

<sup>14</sup> Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, “Exhortación a la guerra contra los Turcos,” *Tratados políticos de Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda*, ed. Angel Losada, Madrid, Instituto de Estudios Políticos, 1963, pp. 1-27; idem, *De la compatibilidad entre la milicia y la Religión*, ibid, pp. 127-304; idem, *Demócrates segundo o de las justas causas de la guerra contra los indios*, trad. y ed. Angel Losada, Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1984.

<sup>15</sup> Sepúlveda, *Demócrates segundo*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>16</sup> Sepúlveda, *Demócrates segundo*, p. 35: “...siendo por lo demás tan cobardes y tímidos que apenas pueden resistir la presencia hostil de los nuestros:” “... muchas veces miles y miles de ellos se han dispersado huyendo como mujeres al ser derrotados por un reducido número de españoles que apenas llegaban al centenar.”

<sup>17</sup> Sepúlveda, *Demócrates segundo*, p. 35: “...se hacían la guerra casi continuamente entre sí con tanta rabia que consideraban nula la victoria si no saciaban su hambre prodigiosa con las carnes de sus enemigos.”

<sup>18</sup> Sepúlveda, *Demócrates segundo*, pp. 38, 84.

ability and prudence but even common sense. Can there be any greater or clearer testimony of the advantage that some men have over others in ingenuity, ability, fortitude of spirit and virtue?<sup>19</sup>

For the one who held in highest esteem the values of the military chivalric code, the proof of the deficiency of a particular people could be found in the lack of the exercise of the norms represented—at least ideally—by the European soldier. On setting forth the captivity of Moctezuma and the final surrender of Tenochtitlán two years later as evidence of the lack of valor and prudence on the part of the Mexica warriors, Sepúlveda effectively took these facts as significant indication of the inferiority of the Mexica people to the Spanish.

Let us move from Sepúlveda's theoretical work to his history of the conquest of Mexico.<sup>20</sup> Again, the figure of the Mexica warrior is one of the keys of his interpretation. In spite of the fact that Sepúlveda had seen the defeat of the Mexica as a proof that they had not been able to create a civil society,<sup>21</sup> he modified the severity of his criticism in his historical work. In his chronicle of the conquest, written between 1553 and 1558, he described the Mexica as a warring people, known for their valor and patriotic sentiments. Here, Sepúlveda rejected the portrait that he had painted in Book One of his *Demócrates segundo*. Instead of attributing cowardice and inertia to the Mexica, he presented the reception of Cortés by Moctezuma as the quintessence of prudence itself.<sup>22</sup> The origin of his interpretation, derived from Hernando Cortés and reported in *La conquista de México* [1552] of Francisco López de Gómara, was the presumed Mexica belief in the return of the god Quetzalcoatl.<sup>23</sup> In this interpretation, Moctezuma's position was characterized neither by fear nor passivity nor confusion, but rather by the virtue of good judgment.

In passing from the justification of the war of conquest to the commemoration of its victory, Sepúlveda described the conduct of the Mexica during the final defense of Tenochtitlán in the summer of 1521 in terms that recalled the valor of the ancient Numantians on resisting the power of the Romans. Sepúlveda presented heroic portraits of the Mexica generals and set forth the heroic military virtues of

<sup>19</sup> Sepúlveda, *Demócrates segundo*, p. 36: "Y así Cortés tuvo oprimida y atemorizada, al comienzo y durante muchos días, aun con la ayuda de tan reducido número de españoles y tan pocos indígenas, a una multitud tan inmensa, que daba la impresión de estar falta no sólo de habilidad y prudencia, sino hasta de sentido común. ¿Puede darse mayor o más claro testimonio de la ventaja que unos hombres tienen sobre otros en ingenio, habilidad, fortaleza de ánimo y virtud?"

<sup>20</sup> Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, *Hechos de los españoles en el Nuevo Mundo y México* [1553-1558], ed. y trad. Demetrio Ramos, Lucio Mijares Pérez, Jonás Castro Toledo, en *Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda y su crónica indiana en el IV centenario de su muerte 1573-1973*, Valladolid, Seminario Americanista de la Universidad de Valladolid y Excmo. Ayuntamiento de Pozoblanco, 1976, pp. 187-462.

<sup>21</sup> Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 53; Sepúlveda, *Demócrates segundo*, 58, 82-83.

<sup>22</sup> Sepúlveda, *Hechos*, p. 344.

<sup>23</sup> Ramos, *Sepúlveda*, pp. 123, 146.

their soldiers. Now he defended the bravery of their warriors, saying that it was not their general character but their manner of fighting that had worked against them. According to his view, their supposed passivity in the initial stages of the conquest owed not to cowardice but to their lack of arms adequate to combat the Spanish.<sup>24</sup> Sepúlveda assured his readers that the Mexica “were not men of feminine spirit, but rather strong and mighty people.”<sup>25</sup>

As Anthony Pagden has emphasized, the principle upon which Sepúlveda founded his consideration of the Amerindian peoples and his analysis of their comportment and customs was the notion of a civil social order.<sup>26</sup> For Sepúlveda, human sacrifice and cannibalism were the definitive proofs of the inability of the Mexica people to constitute a civil society. As a result, they could be denied the right to all their possessions and lands on being invaded by the members of a society which had attained that level of achievement.<sup>27</sup> Thus, in his theoretical work, Sepúlveda had utilized the example of Mexica conduct during the first stage of the war of the conquest of Mexico in order to illustrate that cultural deficiency. In his historical work, he did not change his opinion about their civil status but he did amplify his information and modify the historical interpretation he presented. From all this, we can draw two conclusions: first, the focus of this interpretative effort was the figure of the warrior and the most dramatic change was to have substituted the image of the Mexica soldiers “as cowardly as women” by the figure of the heroic Mexica warrior. Second, the characterization of the Amerindian was based not so much on the use of direct comparisons but rather on the presentation of allusive but powerful analogies, which will be explored below.

## II. The native colonial subject as reader and producer of discourses

We abandon for the moment the image of the Amerindian as warrior to consider two areas in which the interpretative networks that identified both the Amerindian and the female gender came into contact.

### A. The native colonial subject as reader of discourses

This analogy is found in the discussions about the reading of books of chivalry. As a literary genre, the novel of chivalry specialized in deeds performed by noble knights-errant; they destroyed monsters, entire armies and witches and enchanters and easily conquered the lovely ladies who were enamoured of them. I wish to emphasize that the heroic deeds of these works were associated positively with the general values of chivalric culture. Nevertheless, this popular genre was the object

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<sup>24</sup> Sepúlveda, *Hechos*, p. 442.

<sup>25</sup> Sepúlveda, *Hechos*, p. 442.

<sup>26</sup> See Pagden, Fall, p. 43-44, 53. I am also grateful to Ciriaco Morón Arroyo for bringing this point to my attention.

<sup>27</sup> Sepúlveda, *Demócrates segundo*, pp. 58, 62-63.



of much criticism by the moralists of the age. This criticism had two sources, and both had to do with the harm that such readings potentially could do to their readers. On one hand, it was considered that the representation of magic could lead the reader to heresy and the loss of faith in the Gospel.<sup>28</sup> On the other, it was thought that the representation of sexual liberty and sexual relations outside of marriage could corrupt the feminine reading public. When the degeneration of moral customs as a result of reading the novels of chivalry was contemplated, the object of focus was the feminine reader as victim and always vulnerable. Although we know now that, in fact, the great public of readers of novels of chivalry was masculine,<sup>29</sup> it was common at the time to fault women for the passionate reading of such works.<sup>30</sup>

The interesting point with respect to the focalization of women as readers is the fact that the inhabitants of the Indies of both sexes were considered potential readers of the same type. This can be seen by recalling the prohibitions desired by the Crown, with respect to the exportation of books of chivalry to America. We cite only one of these decrees, dated 1543:<sup>31</sup>

...from all this follows great problems, because the Indians who would know how to read, giving them these [books of chivalry], would leave the books of holy and good doctrine and, reading the lying histories, learn from them bad customs and vices; and besides this, if they should think that these vain histories were not invented but that events had actually happened that way, it could happen that they would lose faith in the Holy Scriptures and other learned books, believing, as people not well-founded in the faith, that all our books are of a single authority and manner.

The idea of the possible corruption of the American natives implies again that one of the paradigms with the help of which the Amerindian was viewed was analogous to that which was employed for the feminine gender.

<sup>28</sup> Fray Luis de León offers the most grave condemnation: "Y de sabor de gentilidad y de infidelidad que los celosos del servicio de Dios sienten en ellas [las costumbres degeneradas] (que no sé yo si en edad alguna del pueblo cristiano se ha sentido mayor), a mi juicio el principio y la raíz y la causa toda son estos libros" (De los nombres de Cristo [1591], en *Obras de Fray Luis de León*, III, Madrid, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 1853, p. 37).

<sup>29</sup> See Daniel Eisenberg, "Who read the novels of chivalry?" *Kentucky Romance Quarterly*, t. 20, núm. 2 (1973), pp. 209-233; Maxime Chevalier, *Lectura y lectores en la España del siglo XVI y XVII*, Madrid, Turner, 1976.

<sup>30</sup> The idea that women were the most frequent readers of the novels of chivalry is attributed to Fray Luis de León in *La perfecta casada* [1583]. Cervantes expressed the view that such works "dishonored the maiden and brought affront to the married woman." Fray Luis de Granada imagined another evil effect: on reading the novels, women would vainly consider that they were no less worthy than their fictional heroines of being served by arms and the great deeds of chivalrous men (Cited by Rodríguez Prampolini, pp. 14-15).

<sup>31</sup> "...se siguen muchos inconvenientes, porque los indios que supieren leer, dándose a ellos, dejarán los libros de santa y buena doctrina, y leyendo los de mentirosas historias, deprenderán en ellos malas costumbres y vicios; y demás desto, de que sepan que aquellos libros de historias vanas han sido compuestos sino haber pasado así, podría ser que perdiesen la autoridad y crédito de la Sagrada Escritura y otros libros de Doctores, creyendo, como gente no arraigada en la fe, que todos nuestros libros eran de una autoridad y manera" (cited by Rodríguez Prampolini, p. 18).

On account of their “female-like want of culture” (“torpeza femínea”), the Amerindians were thought to require a careful tutelage in order to be able to distinguish truth from lies and the divine from the diabolical in the “new world” of letters or literate culture. Thus, the didactic discourse directed to the moral improvement of women was another of the filters through which the colonial subject as colonizer believed that the profile of the Amerindian native could be seen with clarity. This superimposition of criteria is found most notably in the works of theological-juridical reflection. The pertinent point of departure is the sixteenth-century appropriation of Greek philosophical thought, which saw in all complex forms a duality in which one element naturally dominated the other:<sup>32</sup> perfection over imperfection, fortitude over weakness, virtue over vice.<sup>33</sup>

In this context, the hypothesis of Francisco de Vitoria on the evolutionary and historical development of the Amerindian world deserves to be set forth; according to Pagden, it was accepted by many thinkers and activists and profoundly influenced Las Casas, Acosta, and other missionary-defenders of the dignity of Amerindian humanity.<sup>34</sup> In Vitoria’s view, the Amerindians should be treated as though they were psychologically children, as adults physically but not mature mentally or psychologically. That is, the American native was seen not as definitively inferior, but rather as one who possessed all rational faculties which existed in a potential state awaiting full development.<sup>35</sup> Thus, that which was lacking was instruction and education so that their rational potentialities could be realized. Theoretically, this concept fixed the model of the relations between the European and the American native as “tutor/student.”<sup>36</sup> Vitoria concluded:

[Aristotle] meant to say that there exists in them [the “barbarians”] a natural necessity to be ruled and governed by others, it being very advantageous to them to be submitted to others, just as children need to be submitted to the will of their parents and the woman to her husband.<sup>37</sup>

In this scheme, thanks to the juxtaposition of other hierarchical relations, the Amerindian came to occupy analogously the same position as the woman or the

<sup>32</sup> Pagden, *Fall*, pp. 42-44.

<sup>33</sup> Sepúlveda, *Demócrates segundo*, p. 20.

<sup>34</sup> Here I follow the argument of Pagden, p. 106 and following.

<sup>35</sup> Pagden, pp. 104-105.

<sup>36</sup> Pagden, p. 107.

<sup>37</sup> “[Aristóteles] Quiso decir que hay en ellos [los “bárbaros”] una necesidad natural de ser regidos y gobernados por otros, siéndoles muy provechoso el estar sometidos a otros, como los hijos necesitan estar sometidos a los padres y la mujer al marido” (Francisco de Vitoria, *Relectio de Indis o libertad de los indios*, ed. Luciano Pereña y José Manuel Pérez Prendes, Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1967, p. 31). This passage is based on a similar one in Aristotle’s *Politics*: “Se gobierna a la mujer y a los hijos...pues, salvo excepciones antinaturales, gobernar está mejor al varón que a la hembra, y al maduro y experto que al joven e inmaduro” (Pereña y Pérez Prendes en Vitoria, p. 31).

child. In this way, the discourses of domestic and imperial hierarchy and domination were superimposed.

In effect, this conceptualization of the treatment of the Amerindian as one of tutelage was common in many doctrinal missionary writings dedicated to the evangelization of the native Americans.<sup>38</sup> Like women and children in Europe, the Indians of America were considered to be given over more to emotion than to reason, inclined more naturally toward sensuality than to the sublime. The Amerindians, like women, required constant supervision and instruction. In the prescriptive European writings on the comportment of women, the emphasis was placed on moral improvement,<sup>39</sup> and that same emphasis is found in all the treatises of religious instruction directed to Amerindian societies.<sup>40</sup> The implicit comparison of the Amerindian with ideas about women and children underscores the importance of the concept of the hierarchical relationship in the construction of alterity: Difference is treated as though it were similarity.

### B. The native colonial subject as producer of prohibited discourses

The second point of contact that I would like to note between the books of chivalry and the discourse that referred to the Amerindian has to do with the practices considered by the Europeans as pagan and superstitious. Let us look at the pertinent testimony of José de Acosta, in his *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*. Acosta was concerned with the possibility that his readers would think that to recount "the care that the Indians put into serving and honoring their idols and the devil" "could seem to some...to be the same as wasting time in reading the nonsense that the books of chivalry make up."<sup>41</sup> Activities focalized and identified as "magic," "witchcraft," and "enchantment" were considered dangerous forces in European societies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>42</sup> According to Irving Leonard, these elements fascinated readers of the books of chivalry, and evidently many readers accepted the enchantments and acts of sorcery as true deeds.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup> See Pagden, p. 222. Examples abound in missionary writings of diverse authorship.

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, Juan Luis Vives, *La mujer cristiana* [1528], trad. Lorenzo Riber, Madrid, Aguilar, 1959, y Fray Luis de León, *La perfecta casada* [1583], ed. Félix García y Federico Carlos Sáenz de Robles, Madrid, Aguilar, 1967.

<sup>40</sup> See Rolena Adorno, "Iconos de persuasión: la predicación y la política en el Perú colonial," *La iconografía política del Nuevo Mundo*, ed. Mercedes López-Baralt, Río Piedras, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1990.

<sup>41</sup> "Baste lo referido para entender el cuidado que los indios ponían en servir y honrar a sus ídolos y al demonio, que es lo mismo. Porque contar por entero lo que en esto hay,...podrá parecer a algunos...que es como gastar tiempo en leer las patrañas que fingen los libros de caballerías" (José de Acosta, *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* [1590], ed. Edmundo O'Gorman, México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1962, p. 278).

<sup>42</sup> See Julio Caro Baroja, *Las formas complejas de la vida religiosa*; idem, *Las brujas y su mundo* [1961], Madrid, Alianza, 1986; idem, *Vidas mágicas e Inquisición*, Madrid, Taurus, 1967.

<sup>43</sup> Irving A. Leonard, *Romances of Chivalry in the Spanish Indies*, University of California Publications in Modern Philology, t. 16, núm. 3, Berkeley, University of California, 1933, p. 253.

The rites and customs of the Amerindians were set forth in many works of ethnography, written in the sixteenth century, which did not come to be printed until much later.<sup>44</sup> There is no doubt that such practices did not conform to the ideals of “the holy faith and good customs,” as understood by the censors. To allow to circulate in printed works Amerindian rituals and superstitions would be to assure their persistence and make permanent their memory. On thinking about the prohibition of books and documents in Arabic among the Moriscos of Spain from 1567 onward, and the expurgation of works, such as the *Repúblicas del mundo* of Fray Gerónimo Román y Zamora, on account of its descriptions of Hebrew customs, one understands why works that were written in Amerindian languages and which described native rites and beliefs, such as Fray Bernardino de Sahagún’s *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*, were not published in their own day. This brings us to the consideration of the discourse on Muslims and Jews in order to see their relationship to the writings on the Amerindians.

Toward the end of the sixteenth century and at the beginning of the seventeenth, a problem that came to be debated frequently was the origin of the natives of the New World.<sup>45</sup> One of the principal currents supported the thesis of the descent of the Amerindians from the ten lost tribes of Israel.<sup>46</sup> José de Acosta’s categorical rejection of the notion, which was supported, as he said, by common folk, reveals precisely the vitality of the claim and the consequent comparisons.<sup>47</sup> The Dominican Fray Gregorio de García elaborated at length the thesis of the Hebrew origin of the Amerindians in Book Three of his *Origen de los indios del Nuevo Mundo*, in which he laid out various theories on the matter. He defended the similarity—in dress, food and ritual practices—between the Amerindians and the Jews in such detail that it occurred to him to declare that his intention had not been to offend his readers and friends who were New Christians or mestizos.<sup>48</sup>

While Fray Gregorio sought and noted similarities between the two groups on the theoretical level, Fray Diego Durán did so on the practical level; his work offers an example of the missionary in the middle of the sixteenth century who sought similarities as a way of determining how to deal with the natives. He too concluded that the Indians had descended from one of the ten lost tribes of Israel.<sup>49</sup> In this

<sup>44</sup> See Adorno, “Literary Production,” for an examination of internal textual evidence pertinent to the problems of the suppression or publication of the works in which it appears.

<sup>45</sup> See Franklin Pease G.Y., “Estudio preliminar,” in Gregorio García, *Origen de los indios del Nuevo Mundo* [1605], México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1981, pp. ix-xli. For a synthetic study of the diverse theories on the origin of the Amerindian, see José Alcina Franch, “Introducción,” in Diego Andrés Rocha, *El origen de los indios*, ed. José Alcina Franch, Madrid, Historia-16, 1988, pp. 7-37.

<sup>46</sup> Pease, pp. xi-xii; Alcina Franch, pp. 14-16.

<sup>47</sup> Acosta, *Historia natural y moral*, pp. 60-62.

<sup>48</sup> Fray Gregorio de García, *Origen de los Indios del Nuevo Mundo o Indias Occidentales*, Valencia, Pedro Patricio Mey, 1607, pp. 197-237; 241-242.

<sup>49</sup> Fray Gregorio García, p. 237; Fray Diego Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España* [1579-81], México, Editora Nacional, 1967, t. I, pp. 1-9.

fashion, the search for evidence of the relationship of Amerindian and Hebrew cultures responded in part to the necessity of finding familiar patterns in the practices of the new and unknown people.

In the writings of the period on Moriscos, many key points of the external characterization of the Moriscos and the Amerindians coincided.<sup>50</sup> It is useful to read the protests of the Andalusian Morisco Francisco Núñez Muley in 1567 and the defense of the Andean people by the Peruvian Indian Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala in 1615 to understand that the Christian discourse on "infidels" employed a "fixed semantics" with regard to both ethnic entities.<sup>51</sup> Besides seeing the problems of the pacification and conversion of both groups in an analogous fashion, the solutions often were also seen through the same lens. The missionaries to the Amerindians and those to the Moriscos consulted each other about theory and practice; the policies applied to both groups reveal that it was common to contemplate them as similar cases. In sum, the search for similarities and the elaboration of comparisons, on one hand, between the Amerindian and the lineage of the Jews, and, on the other, the Amerindian and the Morisco, reveal processes of fixing the characterization of differences by appealing to notions of similarity.

### III. The native colonial subject as producer of historical discourse

One of the best ways to test the model of interpretative frames that I have presented is to consult the testimony of Amerindians who knew and evaluated the interpretations made of their people by outsiders. In this case, the colonial subject to which I refer is that produced by the autochthonous American writers of the period from approximately 1580 to 1650, and by other, non-Indian writers who presented similar visions of the imperial European enterprise and American humanity. Briefly, I would like to consider how the indigenous writers of the first generation born after the conquests entered into the debates whose topic was the Amerindian. On projecting themselves into the public forum, that is, on writing for a colonial or European public, these colonial subjects did not write in the native language, that is to say, the domestic language of the mother. Rather, they expressed themselves in the European, public language of the father (Spanish). This colonial subject made an effort to present native experience not as rituals, customs, or what might be called "folklore," but rather chronology, kings, dynasties, **history**.

To the focalizer who sympathized with the European colonial project, the colonial discourse of the conqueror's perspective would be viewed as pertaining

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<sup>50</sup> See Rolena Adorno, "La Ciudad letrada y los discursos coloniales," *Hispanamérica*, año 16, núm. 48 (1987), pp. 3-24.

<sup>51</sup> I refer to the concept of a "fixed semantics" as developed by Angel Rama in *La ciudad letrada*, introd. Mario Vargas Llosa, Hanover, New Hampshire, Ediciones del Norte, 1984, p. 55.

to the dominion of the intellect, as being “scientific” or objective, reasoned, in a word, masculine.<sup>52</sup> In contrast and from the same perspective, native discourse would be seen as subjective, as the product of the dominion of the appetite and the senses, as “feminine.” In the works of native American authorship, we can see how the colonial subject who praised that which was Amerindian succeeded in “defeminizing” native culture through two strategies: 1) the rationalization and eradication of “magic” and “sorcery,” and 2) the restoration of history, setting forth autochthonous society as an active agent in (rather than as victim of) its own historical destiny.

In such ways as these, this colonial subject took into account the values of militant Christianity and entered, in a fashion, into chivalric discourse. At the same time, we recognize that this subject’s own autochthonous models of the civil order were those of empires established by military conquest. As a result, the foreign discourse would serve as an adequate means to elucidate one’s own values and models of culture. Two cases shall serve to describe this phenomenon: the chronicles of the conquests of Mexico and Peru written respectively by Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl and Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala.<sup>53</sup>

A direct descendent of the last lord of Texcoco, Alva Ixtlilxochitl wrote various historical relations and the *Historia de la nación chichimeca* in which he set forth a euphoric vision of the conversion of the natives after the process which he called (in opposition to the version of Sepúlveda and others) “the most difficult conquest the world has ever known.”<sup>54</sup> Before the foundation of Veracruz by Cortés, says the chronicler, his ancestor, the prince Ixtlilxochitl, had offered himself and his army as allies of Cortés to avenge the death of his father at the hands of Moctezuma and to liberate the kingdom from Aztec tyranny.<sup>55</sup> The chronicler Ixtlilxochitl summarized the conquering and evangelizing enterprises and reduced them to a single process by insisting that with the prince Ixtlilxochitl’s capture of the lord Cacama, “many great obstacles were removed from the designs of Cortés and thus made possible the entrance of the holy faith.”<sup>56</sup> In his history, Alva Ixtlilxochitl claimed that his ancestors always tried to encourage friendship among Christians and Mexica, not only with the inhabitants of the kingdom of Texcoco but also with those of the most remote provinces.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> See Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science*, New Haven, Connecticut, Yale University, 1985.

<sup>53</sup> Other cases, such as El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, could be included. El Inca Garcilaso was the only author of this perspective whose works happened to have been published in his own day. Yet I consider all authors who directed themselves to the European colonial public as writers of this public type, whether or not their works were published at the time.

<sup>54</sup> Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, *Historia de la nación chichimeca*, ed. Germán Vázquez, Madrid, Historia-16, 1985, pp. 223, 233, 244.

<sup>55</sup> Alva Ixtlilxochitl, p. 232.

<sup>56</sup> Alva Ixtlilxochitl, p. 256.

<sup>57</sup> Alva Ixtlilxochitl, p. 281.

We discover an analogous conceptualization of the conquest of Peru by Guaman Poma. He claimed that his father, Guaman Malque, received the conquistadors on the island of Túmpez in the name of the Inca and accepted the dominion of Charles V.<sup>58</sup> He denied completely the idea that there might have been a violent conquest of Tawantinsuyu, insisting on the voluntary submission of the Inca's warriors to the Spaniards.<sup>59</sup> If there had been a war, it was one that broke out afterward among the conquistadors themselves.<sup>60</sup> In effect, Guaman Poma portrayed his ancestors as loyal to the monarch, bringing to justice the Spaniards who had rebelled against their king.<sup>61</sup> At the same time that this position supported Guaman Poma's retrospective political claims against the imposition of *encomienda*,<sup>62</sup> it also served the purpose of presenting an interpretation of the transition from Andean to Hispanic political rule as one of civility and order.

In the case of Guaman Poma as in that of Alva Ixtlilxochitl, the actions of the ethnic lords served as models of chivalric conduct. Either the alliance with the Spaniards in the war of conquest, or the voluntary submission on its eve, signified the consummate practice of chivalry and diplomacy. Thus the same comportment that was seen from one of the most popular European perspectives as proof of American cultural inferiority (we recall the Sepúlveda of the *Demócrates Segundo*), was now interpreted by the native colonial subject as proof of loyalty to the Spanish monarch as well as to the Christian religion. In contrast to the emphasis on the defeat of the indigenous leaders in the conquest writings of European perspective, the individual heroism and collective good judgment of the native lords is the principal theme in the writings of Amerindian perspective. In response to the vision that scorned the native multitudes for having allowed themselves to be so easily conquered, the native colonial subject insisted upon the values of prudence, ingenuity, and bravery of which their peoples had been accused of lacking. In this way, the colonial subject of Amerindian identity or sympathies responded emphatically to the discourse that portrayed the Amerindian as cowardly and cruel, as a lost idolater.

This incorporation into chivalric discourse is also noted in the manner in which the American colonial subject offered his own versions of alterity; in this case, the European was the other. In Alva Ixtlilxochitl and Guaman Poma, for example, the Europeans were the ones who failed to dominate language or the use of the word.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *Nueva crónica y buen gobierno*, ed. John V. Murra, Rolena Adorno y Jorge L. Urioste, Madrid, Historia-16, 1987, t. 2, p. 377.

<sup>59</sup> Guaman Poma, t. 2, pp. 388, 564.

<sup>60</sup> Guaman Poma, t. 2, pp. 428-432.

<sup>61</sup> Guaman Poma, t. 2, pp. 434-436.

<sup>62</sup> See Rolena Adorno, "Las otras fuentes de Guaman Poma: sus lecturas castellanas," *Histórica*, t. 2, núm. 2 (1978), pp. 137-158; idem, *Guaman Poma: Writing and Resistance in Colonial Peru*, Austin, University of Texas, 1986, pp. 13-35.

<sup>63</sup> See Sabine G. MacCormack, "Atahualpa y el libro," *Revista de Indias*, t. 48, núm. 184 (1988), pp. 693-714.

As a result it was they who interpreted badly that which was said to them. The European invaders were the ones who depended on the superiority of political and military tactics of the autochthonous princes; the European soldiers were characterized by cowardliness and weakness described as feminine.<sup>64</sup>

Through these formulations the native colonial subject reconstructed the history that had been denied in European accounts of the conquest. Heirs of dynasties now vanished, some of whose characteristics they suppressed, these colonial subjects erased the distant portraits that identified the Amerindian with nature, passion, the feminine, the domestic, the rustic and the pagan, in order to identify with the contrary values: Order, reason, the masculine, the public, the civil and the Christian.

#### IV. Alterity and identity

Here we return to the phenomenon of familiarity in alterity. Alterity in the stereotypical colonial discourse of the colonizer is not a mysterious category, dark and hidden. It is visible and known; it is postulated in terms of gender and ethnicity: the warrior, the Morisco, the Jew, the women, the child. The significance of this is self-evident. In the first place, the analogies suggest specific models of behavior and superior/subordinate relationships. In the second, the subject recognizes oneself by recognizing the other. The need to define the character of the other is the self-recognition by the subject of the necessity to fix one's own boundaries.<sup>65</sup> As a cultural process, the creation of alterity seems to be an exigency and an inevitability of the subject, whether that subject identifies with the colonizer or with the colonized. The discourses created about, and by, these colonial subjects did not come into being only because of the desire to know the other; their origin had to do with the necessity of differentiating hierarchically the subject from the other and deciding one's relationship to the other. Seen in this manner, alterity is a creation that makes it possible to establish and fix the treatment of the other at the same time as it constructs the limits of the identity of the subject.

War and military culture as vehicles of self-definition and, consequently, of differentiation, are revealing sources to examine notions about "civilization," about the "republic" characterized by civility and order. In the European/Amerindian encounter, the figure of the warrior was set forth as the symbol *par excellence* of the civil order. Ironically, this warrior figure was archaic, as much in his European representation as in the Amerindian one. The conquistador of the years of 1520 and 1530 belonged to a different era than that of his grandfathers who had participated in the fall of Granada.<sup>66</sup> Around 1600, the Mexica and Peruvian

<sup>64</sup> Guaman Poma, t. 2, p. 435.

<sup>65</sup> I am grateful to Kathleen Newman for this insight.

<sup>66</sup> A striking example of this phenomenon is found in the *Naufragios* of Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, published in 1542 and 1555. He reveals his bitter disappointment about these unrealized expectations in his *Prohemio* to Charles V.



elite and their warrior classes were being integrated into undifferentiated masses as "Indians."<sup>67</sup> Alva Ixtlilxochitl and Guaman Poma celebrated the virtues of the warrior community as central to the formation of historical institutions and relations that could exist, in their time, only in remembrance. The fact is that chivalric and military discourse, central to European and Amerindian conceptualizations of the civil order, referred to communities remembered or imagined after the plenitude of their existence. Nevertheless, in spite of the disappearance of its historical referents, chivalric discourse and its variants offer useful points of reference to reconstruct the ideological frames and filters through which the Europeans and Amerindians strove to comprehend each other in America after 1492.

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Gonzalo Picón Feltes' well known reading of the novel points to the satire of the society of Caracas, but ends emphasizing that "*Nólas Rotas* tiene a odio en todos sus capítulos, transfiende a desprecio por Caracas, respira crudi vengança." For him, Alberto Soria is a character whose figure "llega a hacerse antipática por su vanidad, por su egoísmo, por su soberbia insana, por su pedantería insufrible..." (PF, 401), and he sees in the final words of the narrative, "*Fuiste un loco*," as a thing that "resulta completamente inhumano por su estado de desahucio, porque contribuye a la disolución antes que a la unidad" (PF, 405). When seen in this manner, it is not surprising that the novel "no tuvo la resonancia ni el prestigio que era de esperarse" (PF, 399). In his book on Díaz Rodríguez, Lowell Dunham presents some interesting material which shows how the novelist reacted to Picón Feltes' criticism. In a letter to him he said that

Mi el crítico ni nadie tiene derecho a juzgar uno de sus sentimientos e ideas expresados en una obra. Si no, en cuanto el crítico se consagra a exponer sus propios gustos, y a señalar con tanto cómo uno dice, cómo se expresan sus talentos, como si se tratara de un personaje y con el mismo autor de sus novelas, de hecho se coloca fuera del terreno de la crítica, y no hay libro que se le deslize entre las manos, el reproche de autor que no lo desatendiere, como lo he hecho, ya no de modo probable sino de modo seguro, la más perfecta injusticia. En el caso presente la injusticia es flagrante.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gonzalo Picón Feltes, *Literatura venezolana en el siglo XIX* (Caracas: Puntos para la Memoria de la Memoria venezolana, 1972) 399-401. From now on I will cite it the text with the sig. PF. This text was originally published in 1935. (Caracas: Empresa El Cajo)

<sup>2</sup> Manuel Díaz Rodríguez, *Alvaro Soria* (Paris: Oublier, 1901) 349. All future references to this work will be given in the text.

<sup>67</sup> See Charles Gibson, *The Aztecs under Spanish Rule*, Stanford, Stanford University, 1964; Karen Spalding, *De indio a campesino: Cambios en la estructura del Perú colonial*, Lima, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1974.