

GARCILASO AND BERNAL: INTERPRETATIONS INTERPRETED

The events that led to the conquest of America by the Spaniards of the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries have become familiar to us from, among others, two sets of narratives regarding the same events.¹ In the "Prologue" to the first of these narratives, *Comentarios Reales*, published in 1609 by the Peruvian *mestizo*, El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, the following reasons are given for the writing of the narrative: "por dar conocer al universo su patria, gente y nación" of the Incas (Vol. III, p. 11), "para celebrar las grandezas de los heroicos españoles que con su valor y ciencia militar ganaron para Dios, para su rey y para Sí aqueise rico imperio" (Vol. III, p. 12), and to "servir de comento para declarar y ampliar muchas cosas que ellos [the historians] asomaron a decir y las dijeron imperfectas" (Vol. II, p. 32).² In the second of these narratives, *Historia verdadera de la nueva España*, published in 1632, Bernal Díaz del Castillo writes to acclaim his own participations in the important events that led to the downfall of the Aztec empire and, like Garcilaso, to refute previous histories.³

Two native Indian interpreters play a significant part in the outcome of

¹ The present article stems from a course taken at the School of Criticism and Theory at Northwestern University the summer of 1981, entitled "The Narrative of America" under Prof. Tzvetan Todorov. Prof. Todorov has recently published a book on this theme entitled, *La conquête de L'Amérique. La question de l'autre* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1982). Those interested in previous works on this general topic may wish to consult the following bibliography: on the *Comentarios Reales de los Incas*: Frances Crowley, *Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca and his sources in Comentarios reales de los Incas* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971); José Durand, "Garcilaso: Between the World of the Incas and that of Renaissance Concepts," in *Diogenes*, No. 43 (Paris, 1963); James Fitzmaurice Kelly, *El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega* (England: Oxford University Press, 1921); Aurelio Miró Quesada Sosa, *El Inca Garcilaso y otros estudios garcilasistas* (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1971); Julio Ortega, "El Inca Garcilaso y el discurso de la cultura," in *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, Vol. 357 (Madrid, 1980); Luis Alberto Sánchez, *Garcilaso Inca de la Vega, primer criollo* (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Escilla, 1939). On the *Verdadera historia de la Conquista de la Nueva España*: Alberto Careño, *Bernal Díaz del Castillo, descubridor, conquistador y cronista de la Nueva España* (México: Ed. Xochitl, 1946); Carmelo Sáenz de Santa María, *Introducción crítica a la Historia verdadera de Bernal Díaz del Castillo* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1967) and Mario Rodríguez Fernández, "Bernal Díaz del Castillo y su concepto de verdad y realidad," in *Anales de la Universidad de Chile*, Vol. 124 (Santiago de Chile, 1966).

² All direct references to the text come from *Comentarios Reales de los Incas*, Vols. II and III (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 1960).

³ All direct references to the text itself come from *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*, 11th ed. (Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, 1976).

the conquests which these histories, in their turn, interpret. In the *Comentarios*, the inability of the first Peruvian interpreter, Felipillo, to translate correctly for the Spaniards is considered by Garcilaso to be responsible for the deaths of the two last Inca rulers, Huáscar and Atahualpa, and for the subsequent downfall of the Inca empire. Conversely, in *Historia verdadera*, Da. Marina is seen by Bernal as an accurate translator, a translator whose effectiveness leads the Spaniards to defeat Montezuma and consequently the entire Aztec empire. Given the importance that the role of the Indian translators and their translations played in the outcome to both conquests as depicted in two different narratives, my topic for investigation in this paper will be the performance of Felipillo as perceived by Garcilaso and the performance of Da. Marina as perceived by Bernal. What I will try to show is not whether Garcilaso and Bernal were right or wrong in their conclusions regarding the efficiency, or lack thereof, of the interpreters (we have no way of knowing whether accuracy of translation ever occurred), as much as to uncover the hidden ideology which supported the two historians' interpretations of these interpreters. I will try to show the ways in which Garcilaso's criticisms of Felipillo as an interpreter were strongly affected by his dual identity as *mestizo*, by his divided role as both victor and vanquished in the conquest of Peru. In a similar manner, I will try to demonstrate the ways in which Bernal's positive evaluation of Da. Marina as an interpreter was strongly conditioned by his unambiguous identity as a Spaniard, by his unquestioned role as a victor in the conquest of México. I will, therefore, try to determine how the context of evaluation for each writer differs in each narrative and how these differing contexts influenced their evaluation of what constitutes an appropriate linguistic exchange between two separate cultures.

Before one can understand the performance of Felipillo as a translator, it is necessary to analyze the hermeneutical behavior of Garcilaso de la Vega, the narrator of the *Comentarios* and, therefore, the mediator for the reader. The events which he is describing, including the performance of Felipillo, had taken place almost sixty years before he wrote. Given that Garcilaso had not been present at those events, his own evaluation is, necessarily, a re-interpretation of the interpretations contained in the Spanish and Indian accounts of the events as they were described in written documents and oral accounts.

Garcilaso's analysis is greatly influenced by the duality of his own identity as a *mestizo*—his mother was a niece of Huáscar Inca and his father a member of the Spanish aristocracy. His condition of *mestizaje* was instrumental in his vision of a divided nation: an "us" in opposition to an "other." This division, however, was not between the Incas and the Spaniards, as might be expected, but between the Inca Indians and the Spaniards on one side of the equation and the non-Inca Indians on the other.⁴

⁴ Garcilaso is an Inca and as such he rejects not only those Indians outside his own region of

Yet his identification with the Incas and the Spaniards exhibits considerable ambivalence. In his expressions of melancholy for the loss of the Inca civilization, he manifests his belief in the superiority of the Inca culture, while in his conviction of the need for the presence of the Spaniards as messengers of the Christian doctrine, he reveals his belief in the superiority of the European culture. The "other" consisted of the non-Inca Indians, that is, the Indians of lower socio-economic strata, of non-Inca stock, born outside Cuzco, who spoke Indian languages other than Quechua. Garcilaso refers to these Indians as the "barbarians" or the "foreigners".

The language of the non-Inca culture was, for Garcilaso, as "barbaric" as the people who spoke it. Of the language spoken by the Indians of Tumpiz and of the island of Puna, birthplace of the interpreter, Felipillo, Garcilaso writes, "The Indians spoke like foreigners, *bárbara y corruptamente*" (Vol. III, p. 48). Whenever there is any reference to the mode of discourse of these "barbarians," the qualifying adjective which usually accompanies the noun is "foreigner," he who cannot be understood, he who "mispronounces." As one might expect, given his ideological attitude towards the new Peruvian society in general, and towards the language of the "other" non-Inca culture in particular, Garcilaso refuses to accept the translation of an Indian interpreter who is not related either to the royal families settled in Cuzco nor to the Spaniards. Felipillo, the "bad" interpreter, of *gente plebeya* spoke the "language of Chinchasuyu" and, badly, Quechua. Garcilaso is careful to point this out:

...tan mal enseñado en la lengua general de los Incas ...que la de los Incas aprendió, no en el Cozco, sino en Tumpiz, de los indios que allí hablaban como extranjeros, bárbara y corruptamente, que como al principio dijimos, si no son los naturales del Cozco, todos los demás indios son extranjeros en aquel lenguaje. (Vol III, p. 48)

Prior to the time when Felipillo, the "first interpreter of Perú," came into the picture, there had been attempts at communication between the Spaniards and the Indians. Physical gestures, the major means of communication in these instances, had been somewhat successful. When Hernando de Soto and Pedro del Barco saw Huáscar Inca for the first time, "Lo que hablaron no se entendió por entonces por falta de intérprete, si no fue lo que pudieron decir por señas" (Vol. II, p. 60). Later on, both Spaniards "respondieron a lo que pudieron decir por señas" (Vol. III, p. 60). It is interesting to note how gestures become symbolic actions for verbal discourse. Where verbal discourse fails, other modes of discourse are substituted and later described in the written documents.

Felipillo is described in the *Comentarios* as a negative figure, an adver-

Tawantinsuyo but also the pre-Inca Indians. He refers to the latter group in pejorative terms, presenting them as belonging to a state antecedent to the arrival of culture—a state characterized by chaos. It was with the coming of the Incas that the pre-Inca Indians were uplifted from their condition of "barbarism."

sary producer of verbal signs, an anti-interpreter. His failure as an interpreter is communicated by Garcilaso through the metaphors of the "mute" and the "parrot."⁵ *El mudo* or the mute, symbolizes the void of silence. *El papagayo* or the parrot symbolizes the opposite, the chaos of meaningless repetition—a repetition of sounds without significance: "tartamudeando de una palabra en otra, y de un yerro en otro" (Vol. III, p. 49). The idea of senseless repetition is brought forth repeatedly by Garcilaso as he judges Felipillo. The Indian's translations are described by the historian as senseless, devoid of their original meaning and in a state of chaos.⁶

What criteria does Garcilaso use to distinguish a "good" interpretation from a "bad" one? For the narrator of *Comentarios* a "bad" interpretation is that which lacks order and meaning, "e interpretaba las cosas que le decían o habían dicho sin orden ni concierto de palabras" (Vol. III, p. 49.). This lack of order and meaning in the utterances of the interpreted discourse creates unnecessary ambiguity—ambiguity which for Garcilaso is responsible for the destruction of communication, "más oscurece que declara la oración" (Vol. III, p. 49). It is evident, however, that the yardstick which measures the value of an interpretation is the Spanish language, particularly when it deals with religious matters. It is the Spanish language which, for the historian, has order and meaning. Garcilaso rejects Felipillo's interpretation of the Spanish language because his Indian utterances carry a "sentido contrario" to that of Catholic orthodoxy. He blames Felipillo's "bad" performance on his lack of Christian charity, his absence of loyalty to the principles of Christianity, and his ignorance of the "misterios" of the Christian faith.

Garcilaso's judgment of "reasoning" was very clearly linked to his conception of religious discourse. It was his belief that "rational thought"

⁵ A similar image of Felipillo as a mute, a translator incapable of uttering meaningful sounds, was also depicted by Guamán Poma in one of his drawings on the *Nueva coronica*. An excellent analysis of this work by Prof. Mercedes López-Baralt will soon be published by *Revista Iberoamericana*: "La crónica de Indias como texto cultural: articulación de los códigos icónico y lingüístico en los dibujos de la *Nueva coronica* de Guamán Poma."

⁶ Garcilaso considers Felipillo a bad interpreter for three reasons. In the first place, Felipillo is a "bad interpreter because of his inherent stupidity. He is born with what Garcilaso considers a natural deficiency: his inability to assimilate other forms of discourse within his native language. Garcilaso illustrates this point with the case of two of his Indian classmates, who later worked for him as his servants. These two Indians learned to read and write Spanish at a very young age. When they dealt with *cosas manuales*, they had little trouble with the language. When it came to matters of importance, however, "recaudos de alguna importancia," they requested that he speak to them in their own Indian language, "porque por no entenderlos en el lenguaje español no sabían decirlos en el suyo" (Vol. III, p. 49). In the second place, Felipillo is a "bad" interpreter because of his lack of curiosity, particularly in relationship to other forms of discourse. And finally, Felipillo is considered unreliable because of the "utilitarian" aspect of his translations: according to Garcilaso, he would translate only those elements which were of personal interest to him. This third criticism of Felipillo is closely linked to Garcilaso's judgment of the interpreter as an actor, or a performer. Garcilaso refers to the manipulative behavior of Felipillo when he is asked to translate the utterances of Indian witnesses testifying in front of a jury regarding the cruelty of Atahualpa towards his brother, Huáscar Inca. The interpreter, personally interested in one of the wives of Atahualpa, is described as maliciously and premeditatively manipulating the translation for his own gain.

could be transferred directly from one language to another only in those instances where religious matters were not involved. If a Spaniard, for example, says "ten pigs" clearly the Indian will translate "ten pigs." The problem arises for Garcilaso, however, when the objects being translated evoke specific religious emotions on the part of the listener. If the object is, for example, a list of armaments, soldiers and war supplies, this list must be accompanied in its interpretation by a set of moderating adjectives indicating the "peaceful purposes" or the "Christian usefulness" of such objects. When Felipillo fails to do so, Garcilaso considers his interpretation "inflammatory." He writes, "y fue tanto lo que Felipillo encareció la potencia y armas del emperador... que los indios entendieron que era superior a todos los del cielo" (Vol. III, p 50). At this level of "razonamiento" Garcilaso prefers moderation and restraint in the interpretations.

It is in fact in the realm of interpretation of religious signs where the most interesting and complex contradictions surface, and where the reader is confronted directly with the ideological polarity which characterizes much of the writing of the mestizo historian. In general, Garcilaso believes that if the translation of religious utterances brings about an acceptance of these utterances and effects a conversion, then the interpretation is a positive one. If, on the other hand, the translation fails to communicate its religious meaning and prevents the listener from accepting those signs which he does not understand, then the interpretation is "bad."

The major difficulty at this level of interpretation, however, lies in Garcilaso's belief that the Indian languages including Quechua, the language of his direct ancestors, lacked the necessary characteristics to participate equally with the Spanish language in the process of signification involved in religious discourse. He believed, for example, that all Indian languages lacked a sufficient lexicon. "No tiene el indio las palabras que ha menester para hablar de las cosas de nuestra santa religión" (Vol. III, p. 49). In addition, Garcilaso felt the Indian language lacked the capacity for "reasoning" necessary to make the transference of Christian signs possible. Given the importance that religion holds for him (the only way he justifies the destruction of his beloved Inca civilization is by the arrival of Christianity to the new world), Garcilaso concludes that because of the inherent deficiencies of the Indian languages in matters of religion, the Spanish forms of discourse are superior and should, therefore, prevail.

It is important to notice the shift that takes place in the position of Garcilaso regarding his perception of the languages of the "us" and the "other" within this religious context.

...porque para declarar muchas cosas de la religión Cristiana no hay vocablos ni manera decir en aquel lenguaje del Perú ...porque totalmente las ignoran aquellos gentiles, como palabras que no tuvieron en su lenguaje ni hoy las tienen. (Vol. III, p. 48)

A displacement of the original position of the discourse of his Indian ancestors has taken place. From being a component of the privileged languages of the "us" within the scope of culture in general, Quechua has become in this last instance one more linguistic component in the discourse of the "other." Garcilaso then goes on to give a few examples of the inherent deficiencies of the Indian language —deficiencies which make of interpretation a hopeless endeavour. For him, the Indian language lacks the "vocablos que significasen lo que había de decir" such as "Trinidad, Trino y Uno, Espíritu Santo, Fe, Gracia, Iglesia, Sacramento," making the interpretation of Christianity either impossible or an abysmal failure.

Garcilaso denies any possibility of satisfactorily assimilating one language into another when it comes to the realm of Christian meaning. He points out the fact that *some* assimilation has taken place between the time of the conquest and that of the writing of the *Comentarios*. For instance, the Indian languages have adopted Christian words within their own lexicon, words such as "Dios," "Nuestra Señora," "Cruz" and, at the same time, certain Christian utterances have become combined with words in Quechua, such as "¿Cristiano batizascachucanqui?" meaning, "Are you a baptized Christian?" But Garcilaso finds these linguistic borrowings not to his satisfaction. He continues insisting that, even at the time he is writing, the Indian languages are as incapable of assimilating Christian signs as they were at the time of the conquest.

Once Garcilaso has rejected the possibility of a mixed language, he introduces what I consider to be the keystone of his ideological position. Because the Indian languages are incapable of incorporating and assimilating Christian signs, he argues that the Indians should not be allowed to continue to use their native forms of discourse when talking about religion.

Es muy católicamente hecho y consideración muy piadosa y caritativa que hablando de la religión cristiana con los indios no le hablen por los vocablos que para decir estas cosas y otras en su gentilidad tenían porque no les acuerden las supersticiones que las significaciones de aquellas dicciones incluyen en sí, sino que del todo se las quite de la memoria de ellas. (Vol. III, p 49)

The *Comentarios Reales* of El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega is a narrative whose purpose is to inform the "universe" of the wonders of an already dying civilization, to correct previous accounts of the conquest and to acknowledge the heroic deeds of the *conquistadores*. It is also an argument for the imposition of Spanish forms of discourse on the Indian population on the basis that all Indian languages are deficient and preclude the understanding and assimilation of Christian doctrine. When Garcilaso writes that the death of the two last Inca kings and the downfall of the Inca empire are due to the inherent inadequacies of all the Indian languages, "aquel lenguaje indiano," he is presenting a powerful ideological argument in the defense of the conquest of Peru by the Spaniards.

Language in the context of the *Comentarios* becomes an instrument of power, an instrument of control over a culture speaking mostly the language of the "other." It is this speech which, for Garcilaso, needs to be subjugated in the name of Christianity. One ought to remember the opening image in the second part of the narrative. The three most important conquerors of Peru—Pizarro, Almagro and Hernando de Luque—the "tres grandes varones" or the "tres heroicos varones" are compared to the Holy Trinity. The purpose of this "triunvirato" is to punish the Indians for their "idolatría y crueldades" (Vol. III, p. 39). Garcilaso reminds us that their success in this endeavor is accomplished with the aid of God. I am suggesting that the victory of the "triunvirato" may be viewed as the imposition of another trinity: Christianity, colonization and the Spanish language.

Garcilaso's *Comentarios*, thus, is a narrative of the conquest which prescribes the presence of the discourse of the victor with the resultant proscription of the language of the vanquished. Caught within the ambivalence of his own condition of *mestizaje*, Garcilaso did not want Inca culture destroyed, but neither did he want its cultural and discursive formations left to determine Inca thought. Thus, no translation could be a good translation since any translation presumed the existence of two languages, a Christian and a pagan. As an Indian, he wanted the Inca culture preserved, but as a Christian he wanted the Spanish language and culture to prevail.

In contrast to Garcilaso's evaluation of Felipillo, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, in his description of the Mexican translator, Da. Marina, confronts the reader with an opposing view of the role of the interpreter. Unlike Garcilaso's description of the conquest of Peru, Bernal's interpretation of the conquest of Mexico is colored by a different view of the relationship between Spanish and Indian cultures. Bernal was a Spaniard, and as such he had participated in the conquest of México. As he himself admits, the main purpose of his writing of the history is to acclaim his own fame as a full participant in the events which he so proudly narrates. Unlike Garcilaso, he was not ambivalent in his response to the Indian culture. For him, it was in every way inferior to the culture of the conquerors. For Bernal, therefore, the function of an interpreter was to expedite and glorify the conquest while leaving the Indian culture properly subjugated and oppressed. This point of view obviously affected his evaluation of Da. Marina as a translator in ways significantly different from Garcilaso's evaluation of Felipillo.

It is important to realize that Da. Marina has been traditionally known in Mexican culture as "La Malinche," or "the traitor." Critics sympathetic to the plight of the conquered Indians have not thought highly of her as a person or as a translator, to a large extent because her translations contributed to the conquest of the Aztec Indians. As we examine those attributes of Da. Marina which Bernal views as contributing to her effectiveness as a translator, it is helpful to remember that many critics view these same attributes as evidence of her treachery.

Da. Marina, unlike Felipillo, came from the Indian nobility of Mexico, “verdaderamente era gran cacica e hija de grandes caciques” (p 59). She was also the owner of Indian slaves, “señora de vasallos” (p 59). Two main traits characterize the portrayal of Da. Marina in Bernal’s work: the strength of her personality and the effectiveness of her role as an interpreter. Bernal praises her as “la mujer de la tierra” of “esfuerzo varonil” and of whom “jamás vimos flaqueza... sino muy mayor esfuerzo que de mujer” (p. 115).

Bernal Díaz del Castillo finished writing his *Verdadera historia* in 1568 when he was eighty-four years old. Unlike Garcilaso who had never met Felipillo, Bernal had personally known Da. Marina, and had travelled extensively with her throughout the various stages of the conquest of México. His remarks, however, as they are recorded, are not the result of direct observation, given the lapse of time between the occurrence of the events and the writing of the document. It had been fifty-four years since he had first arrived in the Indies and fifty since he had last seen Da. Marina in Mexico.

In Bernal’s view, Da. Marina’s effectiveness as a translator was aided by her ability to speak the languages of México, Guatemala and Spain: “Da. Marina sabía la lengua de Guazacualco, que es la propia de México, y sabía la de Yucatán y Tabasco, que es toda una” (p. 62). She had a natural ability to absorb, read and adapt to different linguistic codes. For Bernal, the conquest was greatly facilitated by the effectiveness of the Indian interpreter, “fue gran principio para nuestra conquista, y así se nos hacían todas las cosas, loado sea Dios, muy prósperamente. He querido declarar esto porque sin ir doña Marina no podíamos entender la lengua de la Nueva España y México” (p. 62). As Bernal mentions, her talents made her a constant companion of the Spaniards, “que siempre iba con nosotros a cualquier entrada que íbamos y aunque fuese de noche” (p. 117) and particularly of Cortés “que siempre Cortés la llevaba consigo” (p. 382).

When Da. Marina joined the Spanish forces as a young woman, she did not speak Spanish but became a member of a two-person team of interpreters. She would translate Nahuatl into the Mayan language and the Spaniard, Jerónimo de Aguilar, would translate the Mayan into Spanish. At the end of this chain of interpretations was Cortés. As time went on and Da. Marina started spending more and more time with the Spaniards (she became the mistress of Hernán Cortés and bore his child), she became more conversant in the Spanish language, until finally she began to translate directly between Spanish and Nahuatl, “Cortés les habló [to the Indians] con doña Marina ... porque Cortés, sin ella no podía entender [a] los indios” (p. 481), and from the Indians to Cortés, “y esta razón se los decía doña Marina [to Cortés] y se lo daba muy bien a entender” (p. 148).

Bernal views Da. Marina as an effective “lengua”, the sixteenth century word for interpreter. As such, she acts as the voice of the person for whom she translates; she talks for another person, or set of persons. She articulates

the linguistic signs of one discourse in the form of the signs of another, she also becomes the mediator between two linguistic codes. The verbs that Bernal uses to characterize this function are "saying" and "speaking": "Cortés les habló [to the Indians] con doña Marina... y ellos dijeron... y Cortés dijo... y respondieron muy bien a los que le decían... y Cortés se informó de ellos... y dijeron que..." (p. 464).

Bernal's characterizations of Da. Marina's translations may be divided into two opposing kinds of statements. In one category are the "palabras de amenaza" (words of threat) whose main purpose is to convey messages of fear, of death and destruction, "y desde que vieron a Cortés que les decía aquellas amenazas, y nuestra lengua doña Marina que se los sabía muy bien dar a entender, y aún les amenazaba con los poderes de Montezuma" (p. 88). In the opposing category are the "palabras blandas" or "palabras amorosas" (loving words) whose purpose is to convey messages of love and peace, "y las palabras amorosas que Cortés les decía con nuestras lenguas" (p. 185). Within this opposition one finds a wide range of different kinds of translations. Using statements that may be categorized as "palabras blandas," she *consoles* the Indians: "Y Cortés les consoló con palabras amorosas que se las sabía muy bien decir con doña Marina" (p. 156); she *reasons* with them: "Cortés le comenzó a hacer razonamiento con nuestras lenguas Marina y Aguilar" (p. 164); she *talks of peace* and peaceful intentions: "y Cortés respondió con nuestras lenguas, que ya les había enviado a decir que quiere paz y que no venía a dar guerra" (p. 122); she communicates *messages of salvation*: "les venía a rogar y manifestar de parte de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo ...que no maten ni sacrifiquen a ninguna persona" (p. 122); she transmits *words of gratitude*: "Cortés les dijo con nuestras lenguas Da. Marina y Jerónimo de Aguilar que se los agradecía, así por el abastecimiento que traían como por la buena voluntad que mostraban" (p. 142).

On the other side of the opposition, Da. Marina is the interpreter communicating in a type of discourse whose meaning is based on violence. The words used to describe her behavior are the verbs "mandar" (to order) "y luego mandó Cortés a doña Marina que llamase a los caciques y *papas* ahí donde está a caballo" (p. 144), or "y desde que aquello vió nuestro capitán dijo a doña Marina y Aguilar, nuestras lenguas, que mandasen a los caciques" (p. 144) and the verb "matar" (to kill) "y Cortés les dijo con nuestras lenguas doña Marina y Aguilar, algo enojado, que eran dignos de muerte por haber comenzado la guerra" (p. 314).

Another sixteenth century meaning of "lengua", one also applicable to Da. Marina, may be translated as "spy." "Lengua" refers to that person who watches covertly, or secretly, to communicate his observations to another person. Within this context, Da. Marina is characterized in the narrative of Bernal as a spy among the Indians for the sake of the Spaniards. When Xicotenga, a Mexican Indian, is preparing to attack Cortés during the evening, Da. Marina finds out about it, "y súpolo luego doña Marina y ello

lo dijo a Cortés" (p. 123).

According to Bernal's document, the translation and interpretation of religious signs were never a problem for Da. Marina. Bernal assures his readers that she was able to communicate Christian concepts, without the slightest hesitation. Da. Marina herself had adopted Christianity as her reunion with her family after they had abandoned her as a baby, he stresses the strength of her religious convictions: "Dios la había hecho mucha merced en quitarla de adorar ídolos ahora y ser cristiana" (p. 62). Díaz compares the attitude of Da. Marina in this instance to that of Joseph in the Bible when his brothers came to him in Egypt looking for wheat.

In contrast to the attitude of Garcilaso regarding Felipillo's interpretation of the religious codes, Bernal lauds Da. Marina's translations of the Catholic messages. Although both men believed the Indians should be converted to Catholicism, Bernal propagated the idea that the linguistic gifts of the Mexican translator were instrumental in the realization of those wishes. He repeatedly used the following model to assure his reader of the facility with which conversion is accomplished through the skillful performance of the translator. Either Cortés or some priests begin speaking of the advantages of Christian conversion. Then Da. Marina translates these religious signs into the discourse of the Indian listeners. The successful formulation of the discourse is manifested by the conversion of the Indians to Christianity.

Y desde que los caciques y *papas* de aquel pueblo y otros comarcanos vieron que tan justificados éramos, y las palabras amorosas que Cortés les decía con nuestras lenguas, y también las cosas tocantes a nuestra fe, como le teníamos de costumbre, y dejasen el sacrificio, y... que no adorasen sus malditos ídolos, y se les dijo otras muchas cosas buenas, tomáronnos tan buena voluntad que luego fueron a llamar a otros pueblos comarcanos, y todos dieron obediencia. (p. 85)

Even in moments of violence and death, Bernal portrays Da. Marina as doing her job well.

Cortés mandó ahorcar a Guatemuz y al señor de Tacuba, que era su primo. Y antes que los ahorcasen, los frailes franciscanos les fueron esforzando y encomendando a Dios con la lengua doña Marina... Y antes que los ahorcasen los fueron confesando y los frailes franciscanos con la lengua doña Marina. (p. 470)

"Lengua" on the more symbolic level, however, suggests that the interpreter moves away from functioning merely as a "tongue," to become more active in the process of interpretation. As Da. Marina became more confident in her performance as an interpreter, Bernal assures his readers, she stopped functioning merely as a mediator between the linguistic signs of one language and another and starts embellishing upon the meaning she transmits. She changes from being a passive transmitter of meaning to

become an active creator of meaning. Having made this transformation, her extraordinary ability to control language gave her great power over the Indians: "y la doña Marina tenía mucho ser y mandaba absolutamente entre los Indios en toda la Nueva España" (p. 62). In communicating her own ideas without previous consultation with Cortés, she gained great power over the Spaniards as well, "y allí le abrazó Cortés. Y doña Marina, como era tan avisada, se lo decía de arte que ponía tristeza con nuestra partida" (p. 221). Her exercise of control over both the Spanish and Indian languages place her in a position of superiority over both the Indians and the Spanish.

As a result of her success, her authority and influence over others started being felt by those around her. The "malinchismo," or that-which-pertains-to-Malinche, became an institution to such an extent that translators who worked with her were seen not only as the extensions of her own speech but also of her own identity. For example, Juan Pérez de Artiaga, from Puebla, becomes Juan Pérez Malinche when Da. Marina begins teaching him how to be an interpreter. In fact, her influence was so powerful that the Indians began calling Cortés by the same name that they used for her, "La Malinche."

Da. Marina, traditionally known in Latin American history as La Malinche, "the traitor," the symbol of negation, becomes in the context of Bernal's *Historia verdadera*, the "good" interpreter. Unaware of the intricacies involved in the process of translation *and* interpretation, Bernal judges her competence primarily on the way she controls and manipulates the discourse of the "other," for the sole purpose of domination.

Felipillo, on the other hand, through his inability to mediate religious communication, is regarded by Garcilaso as the "bad" interpreter. For the mestizo writer, Felipillo's "bad" interpretation was compounded by the view that the Indian languages, *all* Indian languages, could not and *should* not be translated. Only when the Indian stopped using his own discourse would he be able to reject those pagan superstitions inherent in his native tongue. Only then, concludes Garcilaso, would the Indian's total acceptance of the Christian religion begin to become a possibility.

El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, the *mestizo* interpreter of his own history and aware of the complexities involved in the process of translation and interpretation, choose the Spanish language over his beloved Quechua. Caught between the linguistic signs of his two cultures, he elects the former over the latter due to, what he considers, the inability of the Inca language to express Christian codes. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *cristiano viejo* and proud of his own accomplishments in the destruction of the Aztec empire, valued a translation which effectively smuggled ideas from one language into another. For him, Da. Marina's performance as an interpreter contributed to the subjugation of the conquered Indians by the conquering Spaniards. Although both historians judge the effectiveness of the different translators on the basis of somewhat different criteria, both, nevertheless,

are aware of the power of their interpretations either to impede or to facilitate colonization, a colonization designed not only to suppress a foreign culture, but also to obliterate the identity of the "other" through the less obvious but no less brutal violence of language.

*Alicia G. Andreu
Middlebury College*