

April 12, 2005

Dear Renaissance Workshop Members,

This piece I am submitting to you for discussion in the May 4 workshop analyzes a translation enterprise that took shape in colonial Mexico in the mid-seventeenth century. Circa 1640, a Mexican priest, in close collaboration with a noted Jesuit grammarian, rendered three Spanish dramas into Nahuatl, the “Aztec” language. Later this spring, this piece will appear in the *Vanderbilt e-journal of Luso-Hispanic Studies*. Your comments and suggestions will be of great help to me as I work to expand and revise it for use as an introductory essay to accompany a critical edition of these dramas [*Spanish Golden-Age Plays in Mexican Translation* (Nahuatl Theater Series 3, U of Oklahoma P)]. I am co-editor of this edition along with the anthropologist Louise Burkhart and the historian Barry Sell. At this time, I would be particularly interested to find out how to make this edition and my introductory essay useful to scholars and students of theater in the Atlantic world, as well as those interested in issues related to translation and cross-cultural communication.

My participation in this project builds from my work as a specialist in Spanish literature of the early modern era, with a particular focus on the literary career of Lope de Vega. As you will see in the pages ahead, I am now studying this writer from the vantage point of his Mexican interpreters.

Thank you for taking time away from your own work to discuss mine. I look forward to hearing your comments.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Wright

**Between Instrument and Mirror of Evangelization:
Three Spanish Dramas for a Mexican Mission**

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When missionaries in colonial Mexico deployed theater as a tool of evangelization, they also contended with the medium's potential to reflect the social landscape of the playwrights, actors, and spectators.¹ Describing one of the earliest documented public theatrical spectacles in colonial Mexico, Othón Arróniz notes how a Crusade drama, interpreted by native people, became a representation of the colonization process:

[. . .] es una de las primeras manifestaciones del 'teatro en el teatro,' en el cual la escena se desdobra como vista en un juego de espejos. La historia pasada—[l]a conquista de Jerusalén medieval sólo sirve de punto de partida para enhebrar en ella una historia presente, y tan contemporánea de los espectadores que pueden verse ellos mismos como en un espejo deformado. [It is one of the first manifestations of "a play within a play," in which the stage expands as if seen through a hall of mirrors. The distant past—the medieval history of the conquest of Jerusalem serves only as a launching point from which to relate a story of the present, one so contemporary that the spectators can see themselves as if in a distorted mirror.] (71)

For the most part, scholars have confined their studies of this phenomenon to the sixteenth century. Arróniz himself argues that in the seventeenth century, "ya no se sintió la necesidad que le había dado nacimiento: la falta de comunicación entre dos culturas: la

vencedora y la vencida” [the problem that gave birth to this theater—the lack of communication between two cultures, the vanquishers and the vanquished—was no longer felt] (8). In like manner, Frederick Luciani, in the *Cambridge History of Latin American Literature*, argues that after 1600 plays targeted to native populations became largely obsolete, suggesting that, “above all, the kind of mass indoctrinating spectacle that missionary theatre provided became unnecessary, since the indigenous masses were both largely converted to Christianity and horribly diminished in numbers due to war, persecution, and disease” (264-65). Yet an examination of seventeenth-century documents suggests that the problems that fomented sixteenth-century experiments in theater continued to challenge religious authorities. Well into the seventeenth century, most indigenous Mexicans could not speak Spanish and many continued to organize their lives with reference to pre-Conquest spiritual beliefs. This article explores how a new theatrical experiment took root in response to the continued obstacles to evangelization.

In the mid-seventeenth century, don Bartolomé de Alva Ixtlilxochitl (1597?-?) translated three Spanish plays into Nahuatl, the dominant native language of Central Mexico. He also prepared a comic *entremés de figuras* [intermezzo built on stock characters], though it is unclear whether this is a translation or an original composition. By identifying the three longer plays by title and signing his name to the translations, Alva became a unique figure in the history of Latin American theater. That is, he is the only known colonial-era, indigenous-language translator of Spanish plays from the *Siglo de Oro*.ⁱⁱ To shed light on Alva’s interpretations of Spanish plays, I have joined forces with historian Barry D. Sell and anthropologist Louise M. Burkhart. Already, we have examined two of his three translations under the auspices of the editors of *Bulletin of the*

Comediantes and *Criticón*. We are building on these studies now as we prepare a scholarly edition of the Alva translations for publication in the four-volume Nahuatl Theater Series at the University of Oklahoma Press. As co-editors of the entire series, Burkhart and Sell are working to give students and scholars access to the complete corpus of Nahuatl-language theater from the colonial era. Their recently issued first volume, *Death and Life in Colonial Mexico*, focuses on plays from the late sixteenth-century that dramatized sin and its consequences. The insights and linguistic skills of Burkhart and Sell, within this new volume and in regular e-mail consultations, have inspired and informed my socio-cultural investigations of Alva's textual practices.

The translator came from a family of prominent mediators between Spanish colonizers and native elites. His maternal grandparents epitomized the Conquest-era pattern in which women from indigenous royalty married conquerors. Alva's older brother, the chronicler Don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, transformed family records into chronicles about Mexico's pre-Conquest dynastic history. His historical writings cast his ancestors, the kings of Texcoco, in the mold of the biblical kings David and Solomon. For his part, Don Bartolomé de Alva parlayed his linguistic skills and family wealth into the prestige of ordination and two benefices. So doing, he became a prominent exception to the church policy of excluding natives and mestizos from the priesthood.ⁱⁱⁱ

Though Alva himself overcame racial barriers to become a beneficed priest, the inferior status of native people within the church shaped his career. After all, in light of the general policy of native exclusion from the clergy, the efficacy of the evangelization enterprise hinged on either the native-language proficiency of priests and friars or

Spanish-language acquisition by the masses of native people. The demographic reality of seventeenth-century Mexico made the latter possibility impractical. Despite the devastating impact of epidemic disease and forced labor on indigenous people, they accounted for about 80% of Mexico's population in the seventeenth century (Gerhard 23-26). Only the major urban centers had significant non-native populations.

In view of this demographic reality, evangelizers outside the Hispanized urban centers needed to find ways to break down barriers to communication with the native people to whom they ministered. Alva's translations of plays from the peninsula attest to one community of evangelizers who sought a solution to this challenge. We learn much about this group from the manuscript that preserves the translations, now held in University of California at Berkeley's Bancroft Library (Bancroft Man. M-M 462).

Below are English translations of the Spanish titles that precede the Nahuatl texts of the plays themselves. I have translated literally without modernizing titles and names, in order to give a sense of the manuscript's materiality:

fol. 1r: Comedia of the great theater of the world translated in the Mexican language directed to Father Jacome Basilio, by the Licentiate don Bartolomé de Alba.

fol. 12v: intermezzo of this comedia

fol. 17r: Famous comedia by lope de bega carpio of the animal prophet and fortunate parricide translated into the true and native mexican language by the Licentiate Bartolomé de Alba in the year of 1640.

fol. 57r: Comedia of Lope de Vega Carpio entitled the mother of the best. Translated into the Mexican language and directed to the Father Oraçio Carochi of the Company of Jesus.¹

¹ *Comedia* was the generic name for the three-act plays that mix tragic and comic elements. This genre included cloak-and-dagger plays, historical dramas, as well as works based on hagiographies.

The first play listed is, in fact, the oldest extant version of *El gran teatro del mundo* [hereafter *The Great Theater of the World*]. Though editors have dated Calderón's most famous allegorical religious drama circa 1635, the first known version appears in the 1655 compilation, *Autos sacramentales, con quatro comedias nuevas, y sus loas y entremeses, primera parte* [One act, sacramental plays, with four new *comedias*, along with their prologues and intermezzi, part one] (Allen and Ynduráin xxiii). The lack of an author attribution suggests that the manuscript that crossed the Atlantic transcribed an urban performance without attributing the work to Calderón. In keeping with performance and editorial practices of the day, the translator paired the grave allegorical religious drama with a bawdy and irreverent *entremés de figuras*. Though we have not found a source text that matches the accompanying farce, it is very much in the style of the intermezzi of the day, populated by lascivious sacristans, hungry town dwellers, and cuckolded old husbands.

If *The Great Theater of the World* highlights transatlantic manuscript transmission, the second and longest drama in the Berkeley manuscript attests to the importance of pirated editions in the international dissemination of Spanish theater. This play, *El animal profeta y dichoso parricida San Julián* [hereafter *The Animal Prophet and Fortunate Parricide, St. Julian*], circulated in manuscript with an attribution to Antonio Mira de Amescua. But Alva appears to have adapted the play as it appeared in the pirated twenty-fifth *Parte* of the plays of Lope de Vega.^{iv} The third play listed above adapts Lope de Vega's Marian nativity drama, *La madre de la mejor* [hereafter *The Mother of the Best*].

It is significant that Alva dedicated his adaptation of this work to the Jesuit Father Horacio Carochi (1579-1661), one of the most accomplished teachers and scholars of the Nahuatl language. During the 1630s and 1640s, Carochi served as rector of the Jesuit novitiate in Tepotzotlán. The dedicatee listed in the title page of *The Great Theater of the World* was also an Italian Jesuit. A native of Bari, Father Jacome Basilio (1609-1652) arrived in Tepotzotlán in 1642 and remained until 1647. Company documents note that he attained a high degree of Nahuatl competence during this stay.^v Alva's dedications, in effect, pay homage to a master of the "Mexican language" and one of his best pupils. Biographical information and annotations within the manuscript attest to an interpretive community of at least six *nahuatlato*s (experts in Nahuatl) who contributed to the translation enterprise between 1640 and 1644.^{vi} Concrete evidence indicates that these evangelizers used the plays to foment language acquisition. At the same time, contextual evidence points to a possible performance application in which the translated plays could have served to teach Christian doctrine and biblical history to native people. To understand the possible dual applications of the translated plays—for study and for performance—it helps to consider the particularities of the place where this interpretive community came together.

Though only five leagues from Mexico City, this *altepetl* (town, settlement, village) had a strikingly different ethnic character from that of the viceregal capital or its immediate surroundings. Its population featured a majority of Otomi people, who had been a subjugated minority under the Aztecs and spoke a non-Uto-Aztecan language. After the Conquest, the Otomi people retained a distinct identity from the majority Nahuas; documents record that they also suffered from acute poverty and devastating

disease. While Tepotzotlán had an estimated 10,000 inhabitants before the 1576-81 plague, by the time the translation enterprise took shape, the population had shrunk to fewer than 2,000 (Gerhard 127-28).

Citing the locale's linguistic complexity, the merchant Pedro Ruiz de Ahumada, a descendant of one of Teresa of Ávila's emigrant brothers, left a legacy to found a Jesuit novitiate where the Company had already established a school for Indians. In particular, his will stipulates that priests based there should learn Nahuatl and Otomi in order to hear confessions (qtd. in Alegre, vol. 2, 121-22). This bequest provides a typical example of the capacity of the Jesuits to ally themselves with wealthy donors to bring about innovative educational enterprises. What the Company did not contemplate, however, was a change in the discriminatory policies that prevented them from harnessing the talents of Indian men and women to improve confessional efficacy. In the early seventeenth century, superiors in Rome discouraged priests in Tepotzotlán from supporting native women who wanted to live as *beatas* (uncloistered religious women). Company authorities likewise counseled against the encouragement of native men who sought ordination (ARSI, Epp. Gen. 2, fols. 63v, 105v, and 124v). Rather, superiors stipulated that native participation in the confessional process be limited to auxiliary roles: "Enseñaseles ayudar a misa, y a leer y escribir, y tañer instrumentos músicos, en orden al oficio divino" [teach them to help in mass, to read and write, and to play musical instruments, as is necessary to assist in mass] (qtd. in Alegre, vol. 2, 560).

In a 1640 history dedicated to Philip IV, the Jesuit Father Andrés Pérez de Ribas praised the results of this racially-discriminatory model of confessionalization.^{vii} His chronicle presents Tepotzotlán as a beacon, celebrating the locale's choir as the best in

New Spain and noting how its Indian church drew worshippers from near and far: “De toda ella acuden a gozar desta música, y sus fiestas, que son célebres en el puesto de Tepotzotlán” [they come from around the region to enjoy Tepotzotlán’s celebrated music and festivities] (734). Pérez de Ribas does acknowledge that some evangelizers proposed ordaining natives, but argues against the idea. To defend exclusion, he points to an abundance of qualified Spanish priests and friars, as well as the inferiority of Indians (733). Yet he also describes two outstanding Otomi students, Don Geronimo and Don Fernando, who excelled in grammar at Tepotzotlán, after which they studied rhetoric and theology in Mexico City. The former even obtained a special exemption from the archbishop to undergo ordination. Moving on, the chronicler pays particular attention to the life of a Nahua he identifies only as Lorenzo. Following a hagiographic narrative pattern, Pérez de Ribas catalogues this disciple’s virtues. These included the cultivation of beautiful flowers for altars, a rejection of marriage, the refusal to drink wine or chocolate, and the composition of one-act religious dramas (*coloquios* and *autos sacramentales*) for feast days. On his deathbed, the Jesuits rewarded his forty years of chaste living and extraordinary service to the mission with membership in the Company (741-42). As Pérez de Ribas recalls these three exceptional native disciples, he makes them foils for the alleged moral and intellectual frailties of the mass of native people.

Internal Company documents paint a more complex picture, as they record the mission as a place where priests and lay people negotiated cultural and linguistic boundaries. For instance, in the late 1620s a series of increasingly impatient letters from Rome chastised priests there for enjoying Mexican chocolate (ARSI, Epp. Gen. 2, fols. 268, 276r, 279v, and 282r). A missionary posted there during the first two decades of the

seventeenth century reported, circa 1625, on the failures of the evangelization enterprise. He attributes the problems to European anxieties about isolation and assimilation in an Indian community. In his estimation, priestly careerism undercut the goal of native-language proficiency: “Que por muchos años hemos experimentado que los padres que vienen a este colegio de Tepotzotlán a aprender la lengua otomite, no se aplican a aprender más de para confessar mal; por miedo que, si saben la lengua otomí bien, los dejarán entre los naturales” [for many years we have found that the priests who come to this school in Tepotzotlán to learn the Otomi language do not apply themselves more than to learn to confess poorly, out of fear that if they know the Otomi language well, they will have to remain here among the native people] (ctd. in Alegre, vol. 2, 648). The sole exception to this lamentable state of linguistic incompetence, the evaluation notes, is Horacio Carochi. Consequently, the report recommends a reorientation of priestly education in Tepotzotlán based on Carochi’s method of study.

Ironically, the Florentine linguist himself may have been a victim of the career trap the evaluator described. In the early 1630s, he petitioned superiors several times for permission to return to Italy. A succession of such requests prompted an order that “no tratara más de volver a Italia, sino de ayudar como hasta aquí le a hecho, a la salvación de los indios mexicanos, y otomites” [desist from your attempts to return to Italy, instead continue to help bring about the salvation of Mexican and Otomi Indians as you have in the past] (ARSI, Epp. Gen. 2, fol. 384r). In the end, Carochi’s loss was a boon for studies of Nahuatl, then and now. After this order, the displaced Florentine honed his program for language study anchored in cultural immersion. Though the reorganization plan of

the 1620s emphasized the need to improve the competence of priests in Otomi, Carochi's most durable accomplishments in the years after his petition focused on Nahuatl.^{viii}

Though we cannot ascertain when the collaboration between Carochi and Don Bartolomé de Alva Ixtlilxochitl began, we do know that by the time Alva joined forces with the Jesuits, he already had sought ways to enhance confessional efficacy. In 1634, he published the *Confesionario mayor y menor en lengua mexicana, y pláticas contra las supersticiones de idolatría, que el día de hoy han quedado a los naturales desta Nueva España* [A Guide to Confession Large and Small in the Mexican Language]. Aimed at Spanish-speaking priests who needed to hear confessions among Nahuas, it guides a user through a typical confession with parallel Castilian and Nahuatl scripts. As with confessors' manuals in Europe, this *Confesionario* turns on a theatrical dynamic.^{ix} But the natural drama of the genre intensifies because of the colonial domination that informs the priest-confessor relationship. For instance, the confessor asks the parishioner if he takes food and clothing to the graves of his relatives, an inquiry that reflects the ongoing anxiety among religious authorities about the resilience of preconquest religious practices. If the parishioner acknowledges that he does so, the priest's script offers this harsh response: "O pobre de ti, a quien el Demonio trae ciego y perdido, en aquella tenebrosa noche de ignorancias supersticiosas" [O you poor wretch whom the devil brings blind and lost in that dark night of superstitious ignorance!] (Alva, *A Guide to Confession*, 76).^x In the manual, a priest would learn the Nahuatl equivalent that appears alongside this Spanish text. But how many priests would have had sufficient Nahuatl-language competence to scold with such eloquence? Alva's prescription for strong words points to the limitations of the medium. Simple memorization of conversations would

result in severely limited language abilities. A parishioner that did not answer “yes” or “no” would have left the priest at a loss for words. Alva, who had attained fluency in Nahuatl even though he was only one-fourth Nahua by blood, must have appreciated this flaw.

The need for more effective tools of language acquisition united Alva to Carochi at some point after the appearance of the confessional manual and the Florentine’s unsuccessful petitions to return home. Carochi’s *Arte de la lengua mexicana* [Art of the Mexican Language] (Mexico, 1645) attests to their collaboration, as Alva served as one of the examiners who approved it for publication. Within this grammar, citations from one of Alva’s translations provide examples of proper and eloquent Nahuatl. Other manuscript evidence likewise attests to the fact that Alva worked on his translations of Spanish plays at the same time Carochi prepared his grammar for publication (Sell, Wright, and Burkhart, “Traduçida en lengua mex[icana]” 282-89). Using Carochi’s language-acquisition program, a priest could conceivably acquire sufficient Nahuatl to utter the kinds of eloquent admonitions that Alva’s confessional manual recommends. Fundamental to the Florentine’s method is the belief that true communications skills do not come from rules or rote memorization, “sino que es menester oírlo pronunciar a los indios” [instead, it is necessary to hear Indians pronounce it] (fol. 84v). Time and again, the grammarian pauses to comment on sociolinguistic subtleties that stem from long years of interaction with the area’s Nahuatl-speaking population. For instance, Carochi notes subtle differences in speech between men and women that could mislead a confessor: “Algunas mujeres dicen con melindre, en lugar de *notelpochtzin*, *notelpochticitzin*, mancebo mío; es palabra honesta, aunque muestra amor” [some

women say with particularly affectionate tones, *notelpochticitzin* instead of *notelpochtzin*; it is a chaste word even though it shows love] (fol. 83v). In view of this sensitivity to nuances, where differences between how women and men speak inform the language acquisition program, we can see what attracted members of Carochi's circle to peninsular dramas of the era. After all, the vast corpus of *Siglo de Oro* plays was a gold mine of amorous colloquies and eloquent admonitions.

We know from Irving Leonard's bibliographic detective work that Spanish plays crossed the Atlantic as soon as they appeared in printed anthologies (280-84). Of the perhaps hundreds of peninsular dramas thus available to Mexican readers, the three works that Alva or one of his collaborators selected document a translation practice at the crossroads of tradition and innovation. In a recent article, Burkhart, Sell, and I examined this negotiation within Alva's rendition of Lope de Vega's Marian nativity drama, *The Mother of the Best* (Burkhart, Sell, and Wright, "Lope de Vega in *Lengua Mexicana*"). We found that the translation was, in essence, a Mexicanization. Specifically, Alva adapted the drama's pastoral poetry to fit a Nahuatl poetic tradition. He also condensed the digressive original to fit a tradition of Mexican plays about miraculous births. Moreover, he erased the original work's drama of social differences, making all the characters talk like well-educated Nahuas. But this Mexicanization had its limits. Lope's dramatization of Israelite devotion to the Temple of Jerusalem provided so many possible native echoes that, evidence suggests, the translator condensed the work to avoid material that lent itself to analogies with pre-Conquest devotional practices (Burkhart, Sell, and Wright, "Lope de Vega in *Lengua Mexicana*" esp. 173-84).

The cautious Mexicanization supports the hypothesis that Alva intended the translated play to be performed for the edification of a group of native parishioners, despite the lack of any concrete indication of performance within the Bancroft Library manuscript.^{xi} Alva's adaptation of *The Great Theater of the World* yields particularly compelling evidence in this respect. Specifically, its metatheatrical conceit, which likens the journey from cradle to grave to the performance of a play by a professional theatrical company, tested the limits of the Mexican language. As Nahuatl theater had developed throughout the first century of colonization, it relied on amateur performances (Burkhart, *Holy Wednesday* 42-48). Consequently, seventeenth-century Nahuatl lacked equivalents for the vocabulary of theater that the Calderonian drama employs, such as company director (*autor*), dressing room (*vestuario*), and theater troupe (*compañía*).

Faced with these limitations, Alva concretized the drama's underlying moral message. God as a Company Director (*Autor*) becomes Christ, called *Totlaçotemaquixticatzin* (Our Precious Savior).^{xii} Likewise, the translation concretizes the play's defining exhortation to "obrar bien que Dios es Dios" [do good works for God is God]. In Nahuatl, the refrain is to "live honorably for God is watching you" ("*Tiyecnemiz ca mitzmotillia in Dios*"). This concretization adapted the drama to a model of Nahuatl morality plays from the late sixteenth century, in which Christ sits in judgment of sinners after they die.^{xiii}

This adaptation of *The Great Theater of the World* supports a hypothesis that Alva and his Jesuit collaborators envisioned two tiers of interpreters. On one level, priests and novices learning the native language, such as the play's dedicatee Jacome Basilio, could study the plays to hone their skills in Nahuatl. At the same time, native

residents could act, direct, or observe performances, perhaps enhanced with the festive music, elaborate sets, and colorful costumes that Pérez de Ribas recalled from Tepotzotlán during earlier decades. As Louise Burkhart notes, further material support for this dual-use hypothesis comes from Alva's condensation of *The Great Theater of the World* and *The Mother of the Best* to a length that matches that of extant, one-act Nahuatl plays from the first half of the seventeenth century.^{xiv} A dramatic lesson built on native performance could have reached far more people than one-on-one confessional instructions. As such, the translations of *The Great Theater of the World* and *The Mother of the Best* present Alva as an exemplary evangelizer. Yet his version of *The Animal Prophet and Fortunate Parricide Saint Julian* yields a more conflicted attitude toward the project of native confessionalization and reflects the translator's own divided subjectivity.

This play, based on the life of Saint Julian Hospitaller, would have challenged a priest in the seventeenth century with its unorthodox elements. As transmitted in widely disseminated medieval hagiographies such as the *Gesta Romanorum*, the *Speculum Morale* of Vincent de Beavais, and the *Legenda Aurea* of Jacobe de Vorgine, the story begins when a young man from the lower nobility hunts and kills a stag. As his prey dies, its entrails prophesy that he will kill his parents. Julian flees from his home to avoid this fate, finding good fortune and a prosperous marriage in a distant land. His parents, however, travel far and wide to find him, finally reaching his castle on an evening where he is away. His wife thus allows them to rest in the marital bed. Julian returns, sees two bodies, suspects adultery, and unwittingly kills his parents. To repent, Julian devotes the rest of his life to acts of penance and charity toward travelers. In most versions, one of

the pilgrims he assists turns out to be Christ, who confirms his redemption and announces his sainthood.

The playwright who adapted *The Animal Prophet* appended a pre-history of romantic intrigue to the basic hagiography. Act 1 thus begins as Julián arranges to meet Irene after his hunting trip. Consequently, when he flees to avoid the prophecy, he abandons his lover. Act 1 ends when Irene curses his parents, whom she blames for Julián's sudden departure:

¡Plegue a Dios, que él mismo os mate

A puñaladas crueles,

Pues su ausencia ha de matarme!

[God willing, may he kill you with a cruel knife, since his absence will kill me]

(Vega 406)

Acts 2 and 3 follow the St. Julian legend. The closing scene functions like a courtroom drama, with Christ advocating Julián's redemption and the Devil arguing for his eternal damnation. Christ triumphs and Julián learns that his acts of penance have redeemed his slain parents from Purgatory. They ascend to heaven. Left out of this resolution and celebration of redemption is Irene, the spurned lover of Act 1.

Judging from Alva's adaptations of *The Mother of the Best* and *The Great Theater of the World*, one would have expected a streamlined play that eliminated the seduction drama of Act I to concentrate on the hagiographic narrative of parricide, penance, and redemption. This, after all, is what Alva did with *The Mother of the Best*, as he trimmed the piece to include only the Marian nativity story. The basic Saint Julian hagiography could have taught the Christian doctrine that individual acts of penance could redeem

dead relatives from purgatory, provided they had received the sacrament of baptism. Indeed, earlier Nahuatl plays emphasized this doctrine (Burkhart, "Death and the Colonial Nahua" 36). But the Act I seduction and abandonment would not have added anything to this message. Rather, it might have complicated the notion of penance; after all, the abandoned Irene is last heard as she curses. Her unresolved and unredeemed status undercuts the closing triumph of Christ's penance over the Devil's revenge.

Yet Alva did not bypass the seduction drama of Act I. Rather, he Mexicanized it in a way that renders the Nahuatl version a mirror of the unfinished evangelization enterprise. The change emerges from the cast of characters. Julián's parents are renamed Susana and Luís, from Ludovico and Rosamira in the original. The lover he abandons in Act 1 is renamed Malintzin instead of Irene. Her father, named Alexander in the original, is Colhua Teuctli in Alva's rendition. This name suggests a local ruler or lord, as the term "Colhua" evokes pre-Conquest markers of dynastic political legitimacy. Whereas the translation of *The Mother of the Best* erases Lope's social stratification, this reconfigured cast of characters introduces distinctions where none exist in the original. After all, Irene and Julián come from the same echelon of the lesser nobility, as their families own adjacent hunting retreats in the country. In contrast, Alva codes the two families with reference to a sharp social divide. With Christian names, Julián and his parents evoke the baptized and Hispanized Nahua elites of the colonial era. In contrast, Malintzin and her father Colhua Teuctli suggest non-Hispanized and possibly unbaptized native Mexicans. As a result, Malintzin's abandonment and curse carry the added drama of her inferior social standing with respect to Spanish colonial authority.

Louise Burkhart has suggested, in this respect, that the social landscape of *The Animal Prophet* mirrors Alva's own hybrid social background ("Nahua-Christian Cultural Synthesis," n. pag.). His family, in common with other elite Nahua clans, deployed their ancestral ties to native rulers to claim prestige, hereditary *cacicazgos* (governorships of Indian communities), and tributes, at the same time that they used Christianity to highlight their elite status within the Spanish colonial system. But such families faced charges that they no longer were Indian. Indeed, a series of lawsuits in the early seventeenth century challenged the Alva family's claim to the *cacicazgo* of San Juan Teotihuacán; townspeople argued in these suits that, because their father and maternal grandfather were both Spaniards, the Alva brothers and their siblings were no longer Indians (Schwaller 4).

Given this family history, the social configuration in *The Animal Prophet* is highly suggestive. Julián, the nobleman, rides horses and wields swords. These stock accessories for aristocrats in a Spanish *comedia* are newly charged in Mexican translation with significance as markers of native assimilation to Hispanic culture (Burkart, "Nahua-Christian Cultural Synthesis," n. pag.). As a result, Julián speaks the eloquent Nahuatl associated with native Mexican elites, but he "acts" the part of a Spaniard with his swords and horse. So doing, he seduces and abandons the daughter of a non-Hispanized lord.

For a reader today, the name Malintzin also echoes that of Doña Marina/Malinche/Malintzin, the translator and lover whom Cortés abandoned when he returned to Spain and married into Castilian high nobility. Burkhart and Sell caution against a direct the attribution of direct allegorical significance to Alva's choice of names; Malintzin, they note, was a common reverential name for a Christian Maria or a

more native Malintze. Still, even if Alva did not intend a specific historical allegory, the relationship between Cortés and his translator already belonged to the canonical history of Mexico. The story had appeared in such histories as the *Verdadera historia de la conquista de Nueva España* by Bernal Díaz. Issued posthumously in 1632, the soldier's memoir emphasizes the importance of Doña Marina for Cortés's triumphs. But he also describes the conqueror's marital intrigue back at the court of Charles V. In its bare outlines, the story of Cortés is the story of a man who rides horses, seduces a native woman, and then travels far away to marry well.

This foundational seduction-and-abandonment narrative echoes, intentionally or unwittingly, in Alva's translation of *The Animal Prophet*. With its Mexicanized social landscape, the play evokes an indigenous society in which Christianization and Hispanization have created new kinds of inequality. So doing, it holds a mirror to the incomplete evangelization enterprise that shaped the lives and careers of Alva and his Jesuit collaborators. The echo of the curse of Malintzin would have reminded a reader, performer, or listener that the process of Christianization remained incomplete.

ⁱ For a discussion of theater's natural potential for metacommentary, see Turner (61-88).

This article was prepared with the support of a fellowship at the Newberry Library, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. I am grateful to the staff of the University of Pennsylvania Library, Department of Special Collections, for providing me with copies of the only known version of a pirated Lope de Vega anthology for this study. Citations of older sources are modernized in terms of orthography, except in the

original titles of works. English translations of Spanish texts are my own, except where stated otherwise. For Nahuatl translations, I am indebted to Burkhart and Sell.

ⁱⁱ Louise Burkhart discovered the only other known native-language translation of a Spanish play when she found the original, peninsular source for a *despedimiento* drama prepared by a circle of Nahuatl scholars at the Franciscan Colegio de Santa Cruz. The Spanish original was the *Lucero de Nuestra Salvación*, by Valencian bookseller, Ausías Izquierdo Zebrero. Here, the exact identity of the translator(s) is not known. See *Holy Wednesday*, esp. 1-70.

ⁱⁱⁱ For biographical information about Alva, see Schwaller 3-15. For a discussion of the post-Conquest patterns of marriage through which conquerors associated themselves with Aztec royalty, see Carrasco, esp. 93. Throughout this article, I refer to the translator with the honorific “don” in view of its importance as a sign of identity and attained position for Mexicans of Indian origin. When Alva identified himself as Don Bartolomé de Alva, he communicated a specifically Mexican conception of honor and Nahua identity. See Lockhart 129-30.

^{iv} In a manuscript that circulated circa 1630, the play carried an attribution to Antonio Mira de Amescua (see Biblioteca Nacional MSS 16,961). Given the specific title Alva uses, plus his attribution to Lope, it appears he had access to *Las comedias del fenix de España Lope de Vega Crapio* [sic], *Parte veynte y cinco* (Barcelona, 1631). The title the work carries in this edition, *El animal profeta y dichoso patricida* coincides exactly with Alva’s. A series of chapbook versions circulated with the attribution to Lope, but with a different title, *El animal profeta San Julián*. These undated imprints appear to be from the eighteenth century (see Biblioteca Nacional numbers T5165, T1418, T4413,

T14802/25). In terms of the play's authorship, the Morley and Bruerton chronology lists it as a work that probably did not come from Lope (189). What is important for the purposes of this study, however, is the translator's attribution.

^v For biographical information on these Jesuits, I have drawn on O'Neill and Domínguez (Carochi 664; Basilio 367) and Alegre (Carochi, vol. 3, 165 and 265; Basilio, vol. 3, 206 and 220).

^{vi} For these insights, I am indebted to Barry Sell's study of the physical attributes of this and other Carochi-related manuscripts. See Sell, Wright and Burkhart, "Traduçida en lengua mex[icana]." 282-86.

^{vii} This Eurocentric bias was the international norm within the Catholic Church. In terms of the Jesuits, Dauril Alden has shown in his study of the Company within Portugal and its overseas territories, this discrimination even came to extend to priests who had spent large portions of their careers in Asia or the Americas (255-63).

^{viii} The emphasis of Nahuatl over Otomi suggests an irony related to Jesuit linguistic scholarship; they paid particular attention to Nahuatl yet their missions were focused in northern locales where other languages predominated. Indeed, Jacome Basilio was killed in an Indian uprising in the Sierra Tarahumara, where the native people who resisted Aztec domination resisted Spanish dominion. See Wright, Burkhart, and Sell, "Inspiración italiana" 931-32.

^{ix} Lu Ann Homza provides a fascinating analysis of the theatrical nature of confessors' manuals as she discusses how Alva's *Confesionario* adapts European models. See esp. 44-47.

^x The English translation here is provided by Sell and Schwaller, editors of the trilingual edition of the Alva confessional manual.

^{xi} Jesús Bustamante has interpreted the colophon to the version of *El animal profeta* as a record of a performance (86). However, Sell and Burkhart disagree, based on their examination of the colophon in terms of its grammar and syntax, as well as a comparison to the extant corpus of Nahuatl-language plays from the colonial era. They interpret the colophon as a scribal indication of the circumstances of the manuscript's redaction. This use correlates with other confirmed textual records of Nahuatl drama. Burkhart translates the passage in question ["v Axcan omochiuh ynin comedia ynic *omixtlapam* miercoles a 18 de Abril 1641 aos"] as "Today this play was mad, when the cloud cover broke on Wednesday, the eighteenth of April of the year 1641 [emphasis added]". Bustamante translates this passage as "Today this comedy was made, it was then represented Wednesday 18th April 1641." The different interpretation hinges on the meaning of "omixtlapam," which Bustamante correlates to representation. Burkhart and Sell note that this is a patently non-theatrical term; no other extant colonial plays in Nahuatl refer to performances in their colophon, though many describe the day and time of redaction. As Sell parses *omixtlapam*: "o [antecessive particle indicating past] + *mix(tli)* [clouds, with the *-tli* ending lost in compounding] + verb [*tlapani*, to break]. The final vowel is dropped and the "n" assimilates and germinates to the following "m" of *miércoles*, so that "*omixtlapan miércoles*" becomes "omixtlapam miércoles." (Sell, "Interpretation Question," E-mail to Wright and Burkhart, 12 October 2004). In short, no textual information attests to performance.

^{xii} I thank Burkhart and Sell for the translations from Nahuatl to English. For a detailed comparison of the Spanish version of the *auto* to the Nahuatl translation, see Wright, Burkhart, and Sell, “Inspiración italiana.”

^{xiii} For earlier examples of dramas in which Christ judges sinners, see “Souls and Testamentary Executors” and “How to Live on Earth” in Sell and Burkhart’s *Death and Life in Colonial Mexico*.

^{xiv} This length would be the equivalent of eighteen to twenty double-spaced typed pages. I thank Louise Burkhart for this insight and others that come from an unpublished paper, “Nahua-Christian Cultural Synthesis in the Dramas of Don Bartolomé de Alva Ixtlilxochitl.”

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