Enlightenment Implications, Bourbon Influence and Character Construction in *Comedia nueva del apostolado en las Indias martirio de un cacique*: An Alternative Approach to the Life, Works and Ideology of Eusebio Vela

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Introduction

The scholarly attention dedicated to Eusebio Vela, one of the most popular playwrights of early eighteenth-century New Spain, does not stray far from the norm. A general disregard for many works of this period for their assumed lack of aesthetic superiority and their superficially unoriginal content remains common. While the few scholars that have chosen Vela as a scholarly focus have recognized an inherent value in his works, their conclusions have, intentionally or unintentionally, contributed to the continuation of his presence in this category seemingly void of intellectual or literary significance. My intention is to overturn these assumptions associated with Eusebio Vela and to provide a fresh approach to his life and artistic endeavors through the historical and literary analysis of one of his plays entitled *Comedia nueva del apostolado en las Indias martirio de un cacique (Comedia nueva del apostolado).* In my analysis I will demonstrate that Vela's work situated itself far from the simple-minded and uniformly Baroque determinants that currently characterize it and functioned as an ideological, Enlightenment-influenced work.

The intellectual and literary importance of *Comedia nueva del apostolado* emerges when its participation in the Bourbon monarchy's broad propagandistic movement to indoctrinate the masses into their value system is acknowledged. To support his inclusion in this movement, my analysis will be

partially based on the theory popularized by José Antonio Maravall, in which the arts, and the theater in particular, were utilized to "lure commoners into identifying with a [new] social and economic system" (Bass 1). To further support my thesis, I demonstrate that the intentionality within *Comedia nueva del apostolado* reflects Enlightenment influence characteristic of the Bourbon monarchy. The Enlightenment implications within the play become especially transparent when analyzed in relation to the contemporary political and social contexts of Mexico in the eighteenth century.

The broad attempt at re-envisioning Vela and his work *Comedia nueva del apostolado* in a new light will initially start with an exploration of his current image. I hope to familiarize my readers more clearly with the current and/or past interpretations of Eusebio Vela and his works through a brief discussion of the analyses made by several scholars. The critical review of the bibliography on Vela will identify short sightings that have contributed to how Vela and his work are currently misinterpreted. The review will confirm the need for a distinct and holistic approach to *Comedia nueva del apostolado*, one that takes into account contemporary contextual circumstances.

Chapter I, "Habsburg Vestiges, Bourbon Remodeling and the Spirit of Vela's Time," provides the contextual foundation for later textual analysis. The review of the social, racial and political circumstances both before and after the transition of monarchies that took place during Vela's lifetime will aid in

elucidating the less recognized intentionality within Vela's play. A clear understanding of the historical realities cemented by the Habsburg dynasty and denounced by the Spanish Bourbons will allow for the contemporary message of Vela's play to surface, one in which community, reduced-alterity and inclusion trumped traditional divisions based on power and social status. Despite prevailing opinions, the early Spanish Bourbons did not sit back idly until the implementation of formal Bourbon reforms later in the century. They immediately developed and actualized change through cultural reforms.

Theater took a primary role in these reforms and its specific utility within Vela's lifetime will characterize Chapter II, "Early Bourbon Cultural Reform through Theater." Playwrights and other artists such as Vela were some of the first to accommodate the new Bourbon monarchy and its supporters. By presenting material partial to the Bourbons' ambitions to the masses, Vela participated in their large-scale indoctrination project. To further support the notion that Vela's ideological motives were imbued with Enlightenment and Bourbon intentions, I present several palpable theatrical accomplishments that concretely confirm his enlightened disposition in the section "Tangible Enlightenment Tendencies and Reform Foreshadowing in Vela's Theatrical Pursuits."

In Chapter III, "Identifying Vela's Ideological Intentions through Textual Analysis and Character Construction," I will focus on the ideological

Enlightenment implications within the work itself through plot analysis and character construction. I will begin by briefly mentioning José Antonio Maravall's *Politica directiva en el teatro ilustrado* and Ignacio de Luzán's *La Poética o reglas de la poesía en general y de sus principales especies*, two primary sources that are frequently referenced in support of my thesis. I then present ways in which Vela's choice of story, the retelling of the Conquest, served the same purpose of many other historical revisionisms during the period, to appropriate foundational myths for the Bourbons in order to legitimize their monarchical roles.

Following this analysis, my discussion will primarily focus on the construction of several principle characters. The independent and cumulative roles and actions of these characters of diverse racial and social backgrounds provide a model for change for subjects fixed in the traditional way of life. I will first discuss the role of Cortés in the section entitled, "Cortés: Modeling the Enlightened Hero and the Just King," whose portrayal as a peaceful and loving leader in the play is reminiscent of the enlightened new hero and the just king. His symbolic representation as monarch allows for subject hood and monarchy-vassal relations to be redefined according to Bourbon standards. Secondly, in "The Native: Making Space for the Potential Bourbon Subject," I will analyze the multiple roles of the natives. The portrayal of several natives as potential future Bourbon subjects promotes their equality under the monarch. Through

glorifying the converted and shaming the traditional Vela symbolically promotes an acceptance of the new monarchy and its value system. Lastly, I will look at the reinvention of Church and the aristocracy in "The Spaniards and Friars: Reimagining Bourbon Roles for the Church and Aristocracy" through the construction of the Spaniards including Fray Martín, Alonso de Estrada and Martín de Calahorra. Vela is able to discourage the decadence and political independence both the Church and State had come to represent through the Habsburg rule. He does this by portraying the characters as opposed to materialism and dependent upon Cortés and the monarch.

Critical Reception of Eusebio Vela and His Works

Vela's current legacy has not fared as well as his contemporary popularity amongst the masses. Within the last century very few scholars have written about the famed actor and playwright and even fewer have taken a literary analytical approach to his works. While the overarching and looming "notions of Hispanic primitivism or anti-intellectualism" (Hill 1) attributed to the period have undoubtedly contributed to this disregard, so have the few scholarly pieces concerning Vela and his works. Of the four works pertaining to Vela that I have chose to analyze, three claim to focus on Vela and his productions; the book written by Armando de María y Campos, *Andanzas y picardías de Eusebio Vela: Autor y comediante Mexicano del siglo XVIII* published in 1944, the article by J.R. Spell, "The Theater in New Spain in the Early Eighteenth Century"

published in 1947 and the most recent article written by Víctor Grovas entitled, "Eusebio Vela y teatro del siglo XVIII en México: la visión del indígena como *otro"* published in 2008. While the older works provide historical insight into Vela's life and the daily functions of the theater in the eighteenth century, they forgo any theoretical pondering, maintain superficial readings of his works and thus contribute to the notion that Vela's works were secondary in comparison to the Spanish Golden Age productions of the earlier century.

The more recently published article, "Eusebio Vela y teatro del siglo XVIII en México: la visión del indígena como *otro"* does move to a deeper level of character analysis but fails to accurately analyze the ideological implications present in *Comedia nueva del apostolado* within the synchronic contextual landscape. Grovas' reading of the play can be summarized briefly in one sentence when he notes that, "La confrontación violenta entre el indígena y el español está dada entonces desde el planteamiento de los hechos en el drama" (7). Rather than recognize the implicit reduced alterity, equality and potential subject hood made available to the native characters within the play, he focuses on the elements of perceived alienation that maintain the groups separate.

In the book *Propriety and Permissiveness in Bourbon Spain*, Eusebio Vela and his theatrical, personal and stylistic endeavors take an ephemeral limelight. Though not the primary focus of the book, his reference serves as support in author Juan Pedro Viqueira Albán's analysis of the effects of the Bourbon

reforms on theater eighteenth-century Mexico. The author categorizes Vela's work as the embodiment of the Baroque, or, the antithesis of the Enlightenment, in terms of theatrical style. This claim in turn, reduces its intellectual value by implicit association. I would argue that while his flashy visual effects were necessary to meet the expectations of the audience, his plays were not without ideological substance as Viqueira Albán's reading might have some believe. This aspect becomes more evident when placed within the contemporary context of the period.

Chapter I

Habsburg Vestiges, Bourbon Remodeling and the Spirit of Eusebio Vela's Time

Born in 1688 in Toledo, Spain (commonly misconceived as Mexico) Vela stood witness to a deteriorating monarchy. At the end of the seventeenth century, the Kingdoms of Spain were experiencing extreme political strife, social uncertainty, economic decay and a decline of European influence. The riches, decadence and power that adorned the Spanish monarchy in the early colonial period were floundered. As Anthony Pagden notes, "By the end of the seventeenth century it had also become apparent that the Spanish Monarchy had become impossibly overextended. It had grown too fast, was too heavily engaged on too many fronts at once" (8). These vast financial commitments, such as the Thirty Years war, put strains on the monarchy's resources and eventually ended, "Spain's tenure as the most powerful state in Europe" (Phillips and Phillips 161). Exacerbating the monarchy's economic and political ruin in the seventeenth century were rounds of expulsions, epidemics and agrarian distress. The population most directly affected resided in the motherland where these events resulted in tax increases, reduced and unpaid pensions and decreased standards of living for the average subject.

The rippling effects of the decline of the Spanish Monarchy were not limited to the peninsula. A product and result of this abatement was a waning

authority in their colonies, particularly those in New Spain. The difficulty in controlling an area so large, exacerbated by the wide geographical space separating the two, led to an unintended form of authority where power no longer resided in the hands of the crown, but rather, in the hands of individuals or groups such as the Church and a few wealthy and powerful families. The decentralization that stemmed from this loss in allegiance to the monarchy resulted in fraud, contraband trade, tax evasion, nepotism and the increase of private interests amongst other things that cyclically contributed to even further deterioration in the Spanish monarchy.

As previously mentioned, one of the most influential authorities in Spanish America was the Church. Although the accumulating jurisdiction of the Church is not singularly attributable to the decline of the monarchy in the seventeenth century, their position was ideal to partially fill the void created by it. Their constant presence not only played a large part in guiding the comportment of the subjects, but also in creating the "ethnic and political customs and institutions" (Hill 7) present during the period. The influence of the Catholic church can be traced back to 1492 when King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, the widely perceived founding monarchs of what would later become the Spanish empire, received permission through Papal decree by Pope Alexander VI to convert the inhabitants of the New World as justification for conquest. Despite the ulterior motives present in the venture, the Catholic

monarchs took their role in disseminating the Catholic religion seriously and saw it their duty to transform these naïve inhabitants into model subjects comparable to, "the medieval Hispanic people [who] were profoundly Catholic" (McAlister 19).

Following the first *conquistadors* to the region were "religious persons of saintly life and character" (McAlister 166) who were sent with the purpose of spiritually conquering the natives of the New World. In Mexico, where the populations were significant, the crown sought to initiate efficient methods of conversion. Due to their proven track record with converting perceived heathens of the Old World and their commitment to maintaining simplistic lifestyles, the monarchy elected several regular orders to complete the task of conversion in the New World. Among these orders to make "rapid strides in America" (Weber 93) were the Franciscans, Dominicans and the Order of Saint Augustine. From early on for the lack of manpower, these orders were bestowed with significant authority comparable to positions much higher within the hierarchical organization of the secular Catholic Church. This shortfall of secular clergy was quickly remedied to meet the religious needs of the growing number of Spaniards and *criollos.* In early colonial Mexico a royal decree shifted crown support to the secular church despite their "reputation as educationally ill-prepared and morally lax" (Larkin). The change in support contributed to the conflict-prone relationship between the two clergies

throughout the colonial period.

Despite the friction between the two, the maintenance of the fervent Catholic tradition was a mutual task whose "persistence and pervasiveness…is one of the most obvious legacies of the colonial period in Latin America" (176). By the seventeenth century the products resulting from a culmination of the Catholic renaissance had assumed a place in the colonial society. In its wake, the strict adherence to the Catholic religion left behind a wealthy and powerful Church, a communal religious consciousness and a legacy of "institutions to defend, enforce, and [to] spread the Catholic faith" (Restall and Lane 184).

Minding their adherence to the communal and traditional Catholic belief system, the Catholic Habsburg monarchs of the seventeenth century reflected deeply on their present bad fortune. Their concluding rationale was that they were receiving punishment on behalf of God because of his discontentment with the comportment of the Spanish monarchy and its subjects, more specifically, those of New Spain. The moral and social degeneration in New Spain seemed to yield an environment more inclined to sinful behavior. The complications produced by, among many other things, the addition of new classes and categorizations of people provided more opportunities for straying from the Catholic expectation. For example, the Church forbade Spaniards from "interacting with people of native of African descent in ways other than sanctioned labor relationship" (Restall and Lane, 193). The effects of this ban

defined much of the unique social character of New Spain during the colonial period.

Institutions that sought the separation of the Spaniards and the Indians emerged almost immediately following the conquest. The *encomienda* system, "though not slavery, [yet] sometimes…close to it…" (Restall and Lane 140), was instituted to control indigenous labor under Spanish rule with profits of the indigenous work benefitting predominately the *encomendero*, or owner of the Indians. This system eventually gave way to the *repartamiento* and the *corregimiento* institutions that were created as "softer" alternatives to the encomienda. Despite the more amiable conditions the new institutions sought to embody, they continued to abuse the physical and economic welfare of the natives and solidify the long-standing oppression and inequality amongst the population.

The division between the populations was exacerbated by the creation of political categories separating the two. Initially, the Republic of Indians and the Republic of Spaniards were created to allow for two separate and semi-autonomous societies to develop. Laws enacted to restrict interaction between the populations are discussed in William H. Beezley's book *Mexico in World History*:

> The two groups were to live separately. Spaniards and Africans were prohibited from spending the night in indigenous communities, and

other visits from merchants and labor organizers were severely restricted. A second decree regarding marriage also aimed to maintain the separate societies…(34).

Despite the zealous efforts of the church and crown to prevent it, miscegenation still took place, and an increasingly diverse population lent itself to the blurring of traditional social barriers. By the seventeenth century the Republic of Spaniards and the Republic of Indians had changed in their composition and identity and another order of society had emerged, that of the free blacks and those "tainted" with African blood. The emerging diversity accompanied by the traditionally limited political categorization allowed for much bending and manipulating of the categories. Aside from the nuances involved in determining group membership, the Republic of the Spaniards remained superior to the other orders. Its composition now consisted of not only Spaniards born in Spain, but of creoles that saw themselves as "descendants by legitimate lineage of a race of conquerors…and as Catholics of impeccable orthodoxy" (McAlister 392).

The Republic of the Indians, due to outside circumstances, eventually came to represent two different classes. The first, the *indios de pueblo*, who "were bound by law to live in fixed communities, pay tribute, and serve in *repartamientos* and *mitas*" (McAlister 396) were predisposed to sympathy from the upper classes for their role as "disadvantaged…who deserved public

compassion" (McAlister 395). The second class, called *forasteros*, was made up of those Indians who did not accurately conform to the Republic of Indians. These Indians, along with the many other castes categorized as inferior on the social hierarchy, tended to be viewed as a nuisance by the elites in urban centers where increased interaction between diverse populations became a daily occurrence. Restall and Lane point out that in the eighteenth century, "the city was a place of great diversity, despite being dominated by elites, such as the encomendero class and their descendants, and later merchants and government officials. Indigenous, African and mixed-race servants, salespeople, artisans, porters, and builders made up the mass of urban dwellers"(213).

The growth and increased interaction of new populations prompted a backlash by the elite. A fear of losing their position in power caused "overzealous Spanish bureaucrats…[to concoct] a table of ethnic types called *castas* that divided the New Spanish population into sixteen groups based on ethnicity" (Beezley 35). The *castas* served as a reminder to, "colonial subjects and the Spanish Crown that Mexico was still an ordered, hierarchical society in which each group occupied a specific socioeconomic niche defined largely by race" (Brading, 371). Seventeenth-century intellectual Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora seconded this notion and regretted the increased diversity incited by, "a common folk so very common ... composed of Indians, of Blacks both locally born and of different nations in Africa, *chinos*, mulattos, *moriscos*, mestizos,

zambaigos, lobos, and even Spaniards ... who are the worst among such a vile mob" (Brading, 371). Sigüenza y Góngora's elitist view emphasizes the same societal feature that also prompted the newly defined caste system, a blurring of social barriers. Though in reality the caste system "was hardly systematic…[and] all the determinants of *calidad* were plastic and changeable" (Restall and Lane), its mere existence demonstrated the preoccupation of many elites with maintaining social divisions and inequality within the hierarchical society of New Spain during the colonial period.

The seemingly crystallized political, social and religious characteristics that defined the world to which Vela was born were soon to be set into motion. At approximately thirteen years old while still in Spain, Eusebio Vela observed the death of King Charles II whose "unfortunate" nature contributed to the decline of the monarchy and ended nearly 200 years of Habsburg reign. As the product of centuries of Habsburg inbreeding, King Charles II "lacked the qualities of mind and statesmanship that served the Habsburgs so well" (Phillips and Phillips, 168) and was thus unable to produce an heir of his own. His death triggered a fourteen-year battle for the right to rule the Spanish Empire known as the Spanish War of Succession. King Charles II officially bestowed the crown to Philip of Anjou, grandson of the Bourbon French King Louis XIV, for his potential ability to prevent, "the disintegration of the Spanish Empire" (Phillips and Phillips 170). Despite this official bestowal,

factions of the Spanish monarchy loyal to the Habsburg family and other European powers fearful of Bourbon sovereignty contested its legitimacy. More important than the warring factions that eventually resulted in King Phillip V's maintenance of the crown were the gradual steps taken by the Bourbon monarchy to infiltrate society through a grassroots level. Through this campaisn they sought acceptance from the subjects of the Spanish empire and hoped to eventually "rehabilitate their overseas holdings in hopes of making Spain rich and powerful again" (Restall and Lane 235).

From the beginning of his rule Phillip V and his supporters fought hard to retain his inheritance and to win over his new subjects. Not only did his physical participation in the War of Spanish Succession earn him, "the admiration and loyalty of his Spanish subjects in the process" (Phillips and Phillips 172), but his attempt to "prove the legitimacy of Bourbon rule by grounding the dynasty in the culture and traditions of the Spains" (Cox Campbell 2) eventually succeeded. In order to restore Spain to its former glory and draw its "ignorant and backward" subjects into the light, Phillip V sought to indoctrinate Bourbon values, influenced by Enlightenment thinking, through persuasion and reform. In essence, whereas the Habsburg dynasty marked itself as the "guardian of tradition"(Juan Pedro Viquiera Albán 8) in the seventeenth century, the Bourbon monarchs, in the eighteenth century, "converted themselves into the most determined promoters of the

modernization of their empire and, of course, of New Spain" (Juan Pedro Viquiera Albán 8).

Starting with Phillip V, the Bourbons sought to introduce new ideas and Enlightenment values into the Spanish empire. Most recognized for their later reforms, the Bourbon monarchy would go to great lengths in order to execute their goals of modernization. Approximately 25 years subsequent the death of Eusebio Vela in 1737 was the enactment of the official Bourbon reforms. These reforms sought to counteract the negative elements, according to the Bourbons, of the Spanish monarchy generated by centuries of Hapsburg rule. David Weber summarizes the goals well and emphasizes that,

> Spain's Bourbon reformers, like their enlightened counterparts elsewhere in Europe and America, hoped to bring about progress by applying the methods of science to society. They streamlined administrative structures, sought ways to promote economic growth, and gathered and analyzed data (3).

Also among these shared values was a desired prioritization of the power of reason and collective good, which inevitably prompted a remodeling of the social, economic and political systems created by Habsburg rule.

Though the formal nature of the later reforms often dominates scholars' attention, a transition towards this change that embodied the combination of traditional and modern ideals occurred much earlier. The Bourbon monarchy

constituted change and provided a framework for which these reforms could be more easily accepted almost immediately after the monarchical transition. Sarah Cox Campbell confronts this idea of early change when she notes that, "Rather than occurring in an administrative vacuum, the Bourbons and their supporters crafted a rich and layered context in which desired restructuring was anticipated and sanctioned through social and cultural media" (179). An initial introduction of new social values was one way in which the Bourbons created this context. According to José Antonio Maravall in his article "Política directiva en el teatro ilustrado," the basic Enlightenment values the Bourbons hoped to instill can be easily streamlined into a paragraph:

> …si el programa dirigista barroco se acababa aquí, es aquí mismo donde empieza el ilustrado: letras, ciencias, prosperidad, cultura, afabilidad, buena fe, felicidad en el ciudadano, en la patria, en la humanidad. Todo el programa de virtudes sociales sobre las cuales la Ilustración quiere reformar la Sociedad están enumeradas en este párrafo (17).

As this enumeration implies and as Sarah Cox Campbell points out, in order to understand the changes taking place and the enlightenment thinking seeping into New Spain's cultural elements it is important to remember that reforms should be understood as not only formal directives, but as informal shifts in ideology (179). One of the initial ways in which these shifts were embedded into the established culture of the Spanish monarchy was through social and

cultural media, art being one in particular.

Arts were historically sponsored or contracted out by the crown and inspected by its representatives before going public. For this reason the intellectuals and artists who sought their livelihood through producing art, regardless of their political preferences, hoped to create products pleasing to the monarchy. This desire to produce artwork reflecting the monarchs' ambitions inevitably produced a bias towards the Bourbons and their enlightenment values.

Chapter 2

Early Bourbon Cultural Reform through Theater

One of the most efficient artistic medias during the period for the diffusion of Bourbon values was the theater. Wide-access to a diverse audience, especially that in Mexico City allowed for the Bourbon supporters to infuse the popular entertainment with new values, expectations and societal roles for every sector of society. This is an arguably important detail in the interpretation of Vela's play. While the Bourbon supporters were taking on a centuries' old tradition in utilizing theater in a didactic manner, they were imbuing it with their own contemporary ideals. José Antonio Maravall establishes this use of theater in his work *Política directiva en el teatro ilustrado* by pointing out:

> el teatro tiene un papel de primera importancia: por la amplitud de su público; por la fuerte impresión que sobre las mentes ejercen los medios visuales en esto coincide con el barroco ; por lo atractivo de la forma dialogante y de discusión se ha señalado el carácter discutidor de los burgueses ; por la variación continua de su espectáculo que place por la novedad, etc. (16).

Just as the disseminated values within the plays were manipulated to reflect enlightenment thinking through the eighteenth century, so were the theatrical devices. A shying away from Baroque theatrical elements gave way to a more realistic approach to theater. No longer were the to goals of the theater

to, "levantar fuertes pasiones, …arrastrar al público a contemplar escenas que horripilen o diviertan toscamente, …provocar polémicas ruidosas,…[o] dejarse llevar de una comicidad malsana" (Maravall 12). Enlightenment thinkers and supporters in the theater hoped to convert the extravagant and over-the-top plays with *tonadillas* or musical additions and dances, to "models of morality by making them more realistic and by constructing them around more plausible plots" (Viqueira Albán 40). Yet, despite the didactic goals and theatrical changes set forth by enlightenment thinkers, the very economic and pleasurable expectations of the theater required a presentation that appealed to the tastes of the public. Juan Viqueira Albán highlights this detail in his book when he notes that these expectations, "obliged administrators to be constantly on the watch that attendance in the theater did not decline; they had to program entertainments that reflected the taste of the public even if they did not conform to the aesthetic ideals of the Enlightenment" (33). Leandro Fernández de Moratín emphasizes the audiences' role to a larger degree in the "Discurso preliminar" of his book *Comedias* when he says that in America, financially speaking, "el pueblo era el único protector de los teatros; el premio que obtenían los poetas, los actores y los músicos, se cobraba en cuatros á la puerta, y hablarle en necio para asegurar sus aplausos" (310). Therefore, while the monarchy exercised power over many aspects of theater, public interest did as well. This balancing act required that playwrights mind the audiences'

preferences for exciting entertainment and plays that reflected their resolute world-views as well as the Bourbon monarch's desire to indoctrinate the masses; a dynamic that surely affected the construction of Vela's works.

Due to Vela's upbringing and his important role in early eighteenth-century Mexican theater, it is most likely that he was no stranger to these inner workings of the theater, its political and social expectations and its multiple rationales. Prior to relocating to Mexico, Vela was surrounded by family members and friends that all partook in "theatrical circles in Spain" (Spell 143). Vela and his brother José moved to New Spain sometime around 1713 when it is documented that they became the lessees of the main theater in Mexico City (Grovas 7). Whether as manager, lessee, actor or playwright, Eusebio Vela dedicated his life to the affairs of the theater from 1718 to his death in 1745. Vela, "la figura más destacada en la historia del teatro en México durante la primera mitad del siglo XVIII" (Spell and Montarde VII) embodied what was necessary to be successful in the theater industry. Aside from his ability to appeal to diverse factions, he utilized a forward-thinking approach to the organization of his actors and the production of his plays that inevitably aided in his theatrical prosperity.

Enlightenment Tendencies and Reform Foreshadowing in Vela's Tangible Theatrical Pursuits

Eusebio Vela's achievements in the theater are attributable not only to the success of the theatrical performances onstage, but also to his dedication to the craft offstage. For this reason, before delving into the deconstruction of Vela's work, I would like to highlight the tangible ways in which enlightenment thought shaped Vela's theatrical endeavors. When Vela arrived in Mexico, theater represented a loosely organized enterprise and was characterized by "discomfort and disorder that were customary in the Coliseum" (Viqueira Albán 41). His hope to provide a theater in New Spain that was comparable to those of the metropolises in Europe urged him to make alterations that were possible within his capabilities. J.R. Spell seconds this notion when he points out that, "Throughout…[Vela's] career, he believed in his art and put forth his best efforts to give Mexico such a theater as he believed she deserved" ("Theater in New Spain" 159). Vela implemented changes in the theater and utilized products of enlightenment thought to increase the success of his plays. Many of these efforts would anticipate the Bourbon reforms that were to be formally implemented later in the century.

Several regulations regarding the theater were passed during Vela's lifetime. These included the reorganization of the administration, the presentation of financial and bureaucratic objectives and a revamping of the

conduct within the theater, effecting both the actors and theatergoers. With the comportment of the actors within his reach, Vela seconded the goals of the Bourbon monarchy by creating a contract with his actors requiring that:

> Each player contracted to play the parts assigned and to substitute for the sick without complaints; the singers promised to be in good voice and especially to make a good impression at the opening of each performance; each actor agreed to memorize the part assigned, to present himself in appropriate costumes, and to gesticulate according to the character played. Each guaranteed to attend both rehearsal and performance punctually and to pay fines or accept punishment assessed for absences without legitimate excuses. Furthermore, each promised to be prepared to substitute in cases of accident, to do so cheerfully, and not to leave town during the season or at the end, until the new company was formed. (149)

Accompanied by this contract was the recruitment of professional actors from Spain funded by the monarchy. By the later years, the fruits of Vela's labor were apparent. Sales had increased, the cast had become more professionalized and the ground was set for the official reforms known as The Theater Regulations of 1786. Though within these official Theater Regulations a more strict adherence was demanded, they mirror much of what Vela had previously sought to implement such as an increased "discipline and professionalization of

the actors" (Viquiera Albán 41).

Another concrete influence within the plays of Vela is related to science. An increase in scientific developments as a product of the Enlightenment allowed for Vela to incorporate more complicated special effects into his plays. Though fireworks and other flashy spectacles made possible by advances in science contributed to Vela's Baroque stylistic qualities, they also implied that Vela functioned within an enlightenment-influenced climate. Together, these concrete theatrical tangibles support the notion that because Eusebio Vela incorporated modern thought offstage, he also portrayed it ideologically within his works. With the contextual setting in place, I would like to examine more closely the ways in which these changes can be identified, and enlightenment values detected, within the structure and character construction in *Comedia nueva del Apostolado.*

Chapter 3

Identifying Vela's Ideological Intentions and Enlightenment Tendencies through Plot Analysis and Character Construction

Utilizing theater for didactic purposes is not new to the eighteenth century. From the beginning of the Conquest, Spaniards utilized the particular art form to disseminate ideas and Christian ideology to the native population. While the theatrical tactics remained unchanged, the content most assuredly did not. José Antonio Maravall argues in *Política directiva en el teatro ilustrado* that the didactic content of the theater changed based on the political desires of the ruling classes, which, in the case of the eighteenth-century New Spain, meant the Bourbons and their supporters. Not only does Maravall assess the propagandistic nature of theater, he highlights the particular ideological and symbolic transformations taking place during the transition from the Habsburg to the Bourbon monarchies. The theoretical work initiated by Maravall is paramount to the realization of my argument and is dependent on the claim that it was used to propagate moralizing indoctrination to the masses. Cited in Maravall's work, and also relevant to my own, is Ignacio de Luzán's book entitled *La Poética o reglas de la poesía en general y de sus principales especies.* This more in-depth reflection over the esthetics of Spanish literary works of the eighteenth century also enumerates the enlightenment and neoclassic qualities within the products themselves. More specifically, I utilize a few of Luzán's

descriptions to qualify the enlightened and neoclassic content, style and ideology within Vela's work. The primary texts I reference recognize the theoretical, symbolic and ideological dimensions present in eighteenth-century theater and/or literature. Their contents and conclusions will aid in supporting my analysis of *Comedia nueva del apostolado*'s characters and plot.

Comedia nueva del apostolado contributes to the diverse group of works during the colonial period dedicated to the retelling of the Conquest. Within the "varios cantos y poemas épicos [that] ponen de manifiesto ese revisionismo en América y en la misma España" (Hill "Conquista" 63), are varying perspectives of the Conquest ranging from vilified Spaniards and innocent natives to barbarous Indians and humble *conquistadors*. What unites these works, other than the topic of Conquest, is the subjective construction of history based on ulterior motives or contemporary values. A general rationale within the historical revisionisms in the eighteenth-century context, relative to the desires of the Bourbon monarchy, can be detected. Authors and artists of the period seeking official approval sought to manipulate historical accounts intimate to the Spanish world in order to appropriate historical occurrences for the Bourbons and codify their roles as monarchs. By appropriating the foundational myths, the Bourbons modified the collective memory of the Spanish world to include their own values while simultaneously promoting enlightenment elements through a traditional framework already accepted by

most Spanish subjects as legitimate.

The innate value of historical revisionism combined with the didactic benefits of the theater therefore calls for a unique analysis of Vela's reconstruction of the Conquest onstage. The history that Vela sought to portray reflects, among other things, values contemporary to his time. Not only was Vela, as other artists of the period, converting, "reforms into relics, seeking to *Hispanicize* a foreign regime by cloaking the so-called Bourbon reforms of church and state in terms of a holy struggle, a just and loving conquest, and a return to territorial integrity and historical grader" (Cox Campbell ii), but he was presenting it on stage in a way that appealed to the eyes of a public with Baroque and traditional tastes.

Set in New Spain and based loosely on documented chronicles, Vela includes both real and fictional characters and occurrences in his play. The main plot traces the efforts of an honorable Cortés and his fellow friars in their journey to bring the Christian word of God to a small native village during the period of Conquest. He recounts the trials of Axoténcalt, a real Indian cacique of Tlaxcala, whose denial of Christianity and relationship with the Devil elicit problems for the achievement of a peaceful conquest. Axoténcalt harbors hostility for Cortés and his men who are rapidly succeeding in the impassioned conversions of the sons of many native inhabitants, including his own legitimate son, Cristóbal. A challenge to Cristóbal's newly formed religious

fanaticism leads to his historically documented death as a martyr at the hands of his father. This incident triggered a fabricated battle between good and evil. The Spaniards, all non-fictional characters, aided by the mythical Santiago, succeeded in curbing the planned attack against them by Axoténcalt (influenced by the Devil) and his followers. The presence of the supernatural including angels, the Devil, a dragon and Santiago not only appealed to the tastes of the spectators accustomed to Baroque theatre, but it reflected the contemporary dominant worldview of the plebeians in which, "Gods, virgins, saints, devils and evil forces controlled fate…" (Albán 28). The overarching goal of Cortés and his men as peaceful promoters of Christianity are forced to eventually use violence as a last resort and a form of protection. Concluding with a brutal confrontation, Cortés and Catholicism triumph and Axoténcalt, the Devil's puppet, finds his justice in death. A comparison to Ruth Hill's analysis of the play *La conquista de Santa Fé de Bogóta* following the brief summary of the plot of *Comedia nueva del apostolado* would do justice to Vela's work. The unoriginal plots and predictable characters that characterize both plays facilitate their neglect by scholars. Yet despite their superficial adherence to the Baroque they not only have "a lot to tell us about the society in which the creator lived (119)", but also about their underlying "ideological impulses and implications" (123).

Cortés: The Model Hero and Just King

Despite his obvious inclusion in the play for historical purposes, Cortés plays a very important role in *Comedia nueva del apostolado.* His role as a rationale and gentle *conquistador* with an underlying potential for violence straddles the Baroque and enlightened perception of hero, thus eliciting a unique representation. The evolved nature of Cortés embodies what Ruth Hill describes in her book *Sceptres and Sciences in the Spains*, "the rise of the man-of-letters and the fall of the man-of-arms" (4). Though he fails to fit neatly in either category, his character reflects the rapid changes in culture and ideology prompted by the Enlightenment and early Bourbon reforms. The portrayal of Cortés in this manner serves multiple purposes. One is the indoctrination of new values by curtailing characteristics of a traditional Baroque hero. Another function is modeling an ideal relationship between the modern monarch and subject through the metaphor created by Cortés and his followers.

In *La poética*, Ignacio de Luzán discusses the meaning and evolution of heroism in the arts:

> Al paso que se pulían y mejoraban mas y mas las costumbres y el trato de los hombres, era preciso que se mejorase también el heroycismo. Porque como naturalmente el hombre solo admira y venera lo que juzga superior á sí, y menosprecia lo que supone inferior, para que el Héroe tuviese ese privilegio, era necesario que descolláse sobre los demás hombres en lo

> que estos juzgaban virtud y mérito digno de admiración y superioridad. (Luzán 301)

In other words, the hero serves as an ideal citizen in which all others should seek to imitate. As Luzán points out, the heroical archetype has changed throughout the periods to reflect different values. Maravall also references the use of the new hero, or rather, the "hombre de bien" or el "hombre ilustrado" cultivated during the period of Enlightenment in the theater. He highlights that:

> El teatro se dirige a formar a los hombres según un saber que en su tiempo se consideró fundamental para la acción del hombre culto, filántropo, filósofo, que había de ir esparciendo con su ejemplo la imagen de la sociedad renovada (18).

Within the context of the reforms, accompanied by the Bourbons' task of modernization, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the changes defining Cortés in Vela's play were intentional.

To assure the audience of their hero's validity, Vela places Cortés within a role of hero with which the audience can recognize and comprehend. Expectations of Cortés and his heroic attributes were popularized through the early colonial writings of Bernal Diaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera.* In this historical documentation, adjectives such as "valeroso y esforzado" (Brody 334) formed his long-standing image. Although Vela's Cortés does not

wholeheartedly embody this traditional hero, who is generally powerful, violent, proud and obstinate (Hill, Conquista 60), he shows potential to harbor the characteristics when prompted. Accepted as a heroic figure by the audience, Vela is allotted space to define Cortés to his needs, one that embodies the enlightened hero defined by moderation, reasoning, tolerance and honor. Characteristics of this hero or "hombre de bien" are present in Cortés' character in Vela's play and underscored by his preference for a peaceful conquest. The immediate dialogue between Cortés and Axoténcalt demonstrates the dual heroism that combines traits to facilitate the acceptance of Cortés as a hero. It also justifies the acquiring of the new world in the face of the *Leyenda Negra*, a stereotype that evolved out of the writings of Bartolomé de las Casas demonizing the Conquest and its participants. Through this justification and redefinition of Cortés, Vela was able in order to appropriate legacy of the Conquest for the Bourbon monarchy.

From the beginning Cortés immediately establishes the intentions of the Conquest, "Ya, famoso Axoténcalt,/veo mis deseos cumplidos,/pues el motivo primero/del triunfo que he conseguido,/fué el deseo de ensalzar/la fe en aquestos dominios (I, 1-6). Addressing the overarching moral controversy in regards to the conquest of the New World, Vela sides with those who claim its justification through the legitimate conversion of its inhabitants. Excluding those in which he more extensively evolves, the stereotypical character

development of the ignorant and pagan natives supports this religious justification.

Through this initial dialogue with Axótencalt, a reasonable Cortés appears who recognizes that violence, though necessary in some occasions, is not an ideal way to convert the native inhabitants of the New World. This mirrors what Ruth Hill describes as the modern hero, "De acuerdo con la reconfiguración de la conquista, el conquistador o rey guerrero debía ser un galán moderado que prefiriese razonar con su enemigo en vez de matarlo y explorar la Naturaleza en vez de usurparle…" (Hill 60). Cortés demonstrates his reasonable side when he recognizes, almost sympathetically, Axoténcalt's disillusionment with the Spaniards. Though he acknowledges past violence, he stands firm in their use of force and their legitimate intentions for coming to the New World:

> CORTÉS. Bien vais experimentado
> que con el tiempo hemos sido
> más tratables y apacibles;
> mas fue forzoso al principio
> conseguir con el valor
> lo que jamás con cariño
> conseguido no se hubiera;
> y así tened entendido

que hay gentes muy apacibles,

y, aunque soldados, muy píos,

pues que militan debajo

del grande alférez de Cristo…" (1, 44-54)

Cortés' reasonable and enlightened disposition again arises in admiration of the recently arrived friars who prioritize education and religion over war and wealth. His dialogue with Axótencalt following questions of doubt in the intentions of the Spanish soldiers who had come before him elicits a flattering response from Cortés:

vienen, no como nosotros,

de acero fuerte vestidos,

sino descalzos y rotos,

siendo la cota el cilicio,

y el escudo la paciencia,

la banda un cordel ceñido,

las plumas sus pensamientos,

el peto un sayal, el limpio

acero la disciplina;

sus palabras so los tiros,

y lo que ellos no alcanzaren

en pechos empedernidos

y al golpe de sus palabras

no se ablandaren remisos. (1, 59-69)

Though promoting a peaceful conquest, Vela assures the audience of Cortés' credibility by introducing his potential for violence through utilizing the rhetorical device *amenaza.* He makes known his powerful role with a slight arrogance when he reminds Axoténcalt that:

lo que ellos no alcanzaren

en pechos empedernidos,

y al golpe de sus palabras

no se ablandaren remisos,

con los golpes de esta espada

(que es rayo que ha despedido

Dios a América, irritado

de vuestros perversos ritos),

destrozaré, aniquilando

almas, soberbio." (1, 67-76)

Following the threat, Cortés' power is amplified by the reaction he incites in Axoténcalt who kneels before him weakened and exhausted while a fellow soldier, Martín de Calahorra, overtly leads the thought of the spectator down the preferred path of understanding, "Oh! conquistador heroico…"(1, 78). The reassertion of his traditional power and position in the eyes of the audience

allows for him to again emphasize his enlightened qualities. After the threat he calmly and paternalistically reassures Axoténcalt that the threat was not directed at him; "Levantad, Axoténcalt,/ que este amago sólo ha sido,/ no contra vos, contra aquellos/ que no abrazaren contritos/ la fe santa…" (1, 83-87).

Other occasions in which Cortés' newly refined and illustrative characteristics arise are in his humility and tolerance. As Maravall cites from Aguilar Piñal in his article, the "'hombre de bien'…es aquel que en su conducta 'insiste en la moderación y el justo medio, subordina el yo a la sociedad y predica la tolerancia como medio de alcanzar la común felicidad' (19). Cortés' very subordination and moderation are evident in his humility. His interaction with Fray Martín not only valorizes the Catholic context present in the Americas, but also exaggerates the humility in which Cortés embodies. Vela established Cortés' humble and noble character by placing him as a gracious and modest servant to a Franciscan friar, who, by his very nature and profession is amongst the most humble and noble of all. The reciprocal nature of their dialogue places them on equal grounds:

> FRAY MARTÍN. Salve, Cortés valeroso,
> salve, causa que eligió
> Dios, por donde consiguió
> efecto tan portentoso.
> No a los pies de este gusano

esté de rodillas quien

tal triunfo logró; más bien

puedo estarlo.

CORTÉS. La mano

he de besar de esta suerte

a vuestra paternidad.

FRAY MARTÍN. Pues con aquesa humildad

quiere vuestro pecho fuerte

ensalzarse a más memoria,

no es bien que me excuse a ello. (1, 147-160)

The recognition of Cortés' humility by the commoner is presented through Iztlizúchil's observation; "Pues el grande capitán/y todo sus compañeros/se han postrado a tales hombres…(1, 166-169). Later, Vela reiterates Cortés' humility with a more comunal response following his intimate confession about his feelings of admiration towards the Friars who model their lives after that of Jesus Christ. The overwhelming response to this disclosure from the diverse crowd validates his character in the eyes of the audience and again reiterates its implied association with the new role of hero:

FRAY MARTÍN. ¡Oh, católico Escipión!

ALONSO. ¡Oh, cristiano verdadero!

MARTÍN. ¡Qué humildad, tan de valiente!

MENDRUGO. ¡Valiente conocimiento!

XOCHIPAPÁLOTL. Mihuazóchil, admirada

estoy de verificar el respeto

con que el capitán los trata.

MIHUAZÓCHIL. Y no es de admirarse menos

que con tan toscos vestidos,

y descalzos, sean más que éstos,

tan lucidos y bizzaros,

donde de veras infiero

que aquesta ropa será

de grande valor y aprecio. (1, 231-248)

Within these praises are diverse qualities embodied by what Vela hopes to portray as heroic. Again, combining both Catholic and modern elements, a humble, devoutly Catholic, wise and respected hero appears.

Later in the play, when Baroque elements dominate and emotions are heightened during a confrontation with evil, Cortés' reasonable character and preference for a non-violent conquest again surfaces, despite his eventual use of force: "No quisiera de violencia/usar, porque me lastiman/los estragos de la guerra" (3, 464-469). His role in mediating the anger of others affirms his innate tolerance and compassion. In response to Alonso's passionate appeal to violence Cortés responds,

Pues que se arma de paciencia;

insigne Alonso de Estrada,

creed que si yo pudiera

sin verter gota de sangre

dar a mi rey, y a la Iglesia,

a la Iglesia tantas almas,

y a mi rey tan rica tierra,

y en ella tantos vasallos,

no dudéis en que lo hiciera. (3, 482-490)

The same dynamic that appeals to both modern and traditional concepts of heroism, surfaces again later in the play. The strong, brave and violent Cortés appears with the provocation of Axoténcalt. After being made aware of his plans of attack by Iztlizúchil, Cortés calls for preparation for the battle. With the help of Santiago, the patron saint of war appearing on a horse from the sky, the Spaniards succeeded in victory, as does Cortés' enlightened characteristics. The decline of threat accompanies the decline of Cortés' "traditional hero" mentality. To an infuriated Mendrugo following the battle Cortés requests modified behavior, "Hermano, temple la ira; pues ríndense" (3, 1084-1085).

Not only does Vela model an exemplary subject through his portrayal of the new hero, but he also embodies the characteristics of a just king. By

"creating heroes celebrated for the same traits as those admired in the first Spanish Bourbon King" (Cox Campbell 135) Vela provides a metaphorical framework in which Cortés serves as a symbolic Bourbon King. In order to thoroughly understand the symbolic role that I propose Cortés represents, it is important to understand the link between the portrayal of Carlos V and the new Bourbon Kings within the eighteenth century epic poem and theater.

As mentioned, the appropriation of historic military conquests was done through manipulating events and acts to reflect the values of the Bourbon monarchy. Individual details and symbols took part in creating this overarching historical modification, one of them being the role of Carlos V. Through manipulating the Habsburg King's character, motivations and relationship with subject, artists "perpetuated a rational and loving conquest that satisfied the demands of the eighteenth century" (Cox-Campbell 122). Artists were also able to create space for the Bourbon monarchy within the historical context of the empire, model expectations for the current monarch and demonstrate to subjects expected comportment towards him.

The evolved role of the monarch, which in turn prompted a new relationship dynamic with the subject, is evident in *Comedia nueva del apostalado* when compared to foundational characteristics of both the Baroque and enlightenment theater. While "the social experience of monarchy-subject relations during the transition from Habsburg to Bourbon rule was being lived

rather than classified or rationalized into set forms" (130, Hill), Vela mirrored present values within a historical past. Through this process, Vela, just as Ignacio de Luzán describes of the epic fable, created, "un hecho ilustre y grande, imitado artificiosamente, como sucedido á algun Rey, Héroe, ó Capitan esclarecido, baxo de cuya alegoría se enseñe alguna importante máxima moral…" (268). A closer look at the relationship dynamic between Cortés and his vassals resembles the ideal relationship between Bourbon monarch and subject, thus creating an easily rendered metaphor for the masses in New Spain.

According to Maravall the change between the monarchy-subject relations reflected in Baroque and enlightened theater was quite defined and notable. Overall, the Baroque theater reflected Habsburg values and sought to portray the monarch as a "judex medieval" (Maravall 13) or one that dictates the law. The theater, in characterizing this monarch, followed:

> una fórmula simple: gobernar es dar premio al sumiso, al fiel que cumple con su obligada subordinación (la cual viene establecida por ordenación divina) y dar castigo al súbdito infiel, al rebelde que repudia su obligación, que se sale del marco de la ley, que contraría la voluntad real (Maravall 14).

While the Baroque definition of monarch incited fear and blind allegiance, the Bourbon monarch sought respect and admiration. As Ruth Hill points out, this

"rey debe ser 'tierno, benigno, dulce, heroico [and] humano…" (Conquista 67), all characteristics embodied by Cortés in Vela's play. These traits implicate that Cortés not only plays the role of ideal subject through a model hero, but serves as a symbol for the Bourbon monarch.

As previously mentioned, the modernized definition of king subsequently transformed role of subject within the Bourbon monarchy. Through shaping a new relationship between subject and monarch, the Bourbons hoped to take the Spanish empire in a new direction in which power was consolidated under one influence rather than several. For Maravall, this model subject, or,

> Buen vasallo, no respira sino para obedecer, para respetar a amar las leyes, los preceptos y la gloria de su rey….Y en fin prosigue Luzán , sólo anhela que todos experimentan los efectos de su humanidad, que todos los imiten, y que se extienda a todas las naciones la buena fe, la policía, la cultura, la afabilidad, la generosidad y, finalmente, la verdadera felicidad humana que pende de la práctica de las virtudes más humanas (Maravall 17).

Many of Cortés' aforementioned heroic characteristics coincide with those that resemble the new Bourbon monarch. Other characteristics provide more insight into the intended symbolic monarch-vassal relationship dynamic modeled by Cortés and his followers.

Though the antagonist Axótencalt views Cortés with fear, all others view

him with respect, honor and admiration. He elicits amongst those that surround him a loyal love that is reciprocated in a paternalistic fashion. Spaniards and natives alike refer to him as heroic, grand and valorous, implying his commonly recognized status as a leader amongst them that is capable of motivating inspiration with his words and his nature. Dialogue between natives Iztlizúchil and Axoténcalt reflects the way in which the behavior of Cortés should be understood as a substitute for that of the King. Though the first eleven lines differentiate between Cortés and Carlos V, they place them on adjacent grounds, with Carlos V being the only one who surpasses Cortés in prestige and worth. The words of Axoténcalt imply the comportment of the subjects not only towards the monarch, but also towards Cortés, as devoted:

> IZTLIZÚCHIL. Axoténcalt, que será
> Carlos Quinto aqueste, es cierto,
> que Cortés no se rindiera
> a otro ninguno en el suelo.
> AXOTÉCALT. Dice siguen la bandera
> de un Francisco, su maestro.
> Conque sujetos, discurro,
> a dos reyes estaremos;
> y si con uno nos tienen
> tan rendidos y sujetos,

¡cómo estaremos con dos!

IZTLIZÚCHIL. Mejor, si son como aquestos

tan humildes sus soldados,

pues solamente de verlos,

siento un fervor que me inclina

a estimarlos y a quererlos. (1, 245- 259)

After establishing the loyalty elicited in the subjects, the last words of Ixtlizúchil bluntly finalize the symbolic role of Cortés. She does this by making parallel the paternal, loving and caring dynamic between the famed conquistador and his followers and Carlos V and his subjects. If the king comports himself the way that Cortés does with his soldiers, it motivates Ixtlizúchil to feel the same impulse to serve and love him as her monarch. By establishing this symbolism, we are not only able to analyze the ways that Cortés represents the Bourbon monarch, but the ways that the subjects function within the monarchy.

The Native: Making Space for the Potential Bourbon Subject

From early on, the motive of the King, the Church and Cortés in *Comedia nueva del Apostolado* is evident, the conversion of the masses. The singular success of the conversion, which inevitably would allow for society to flourish, is portrayed as a cumulative effort by all members of society under one overarching power, Cortés. Through portraying society in this way, the

Bourbon monarchy hoped to streamline and consolidate the leadership and society that had become fragmented in their allegiance to the crown under the Habsburg monarchy. As noted by Ruth Hill, "el intento de forjar una nueva comunidad hispana, un nuevo concepto de nación capaz de hacer que los españoles abrazaran a sus reyes y se amasen entre sí" ("Conquista" 63) was an important element of the Bourbon monarchy. Vela shows signs of adhering to this aspect of society by modeling multiple members of society successfully functioning for the greater good. In showing that "individuos de diferentes niveles sociales [pueden] ser útiles a la sociedad" (Maravall 12), he creates space within the monarchy for all ideal and loyal members of society who profess their love for their king and their societal roles, including the indigenous.

In positioning multiple natives such as the indigenous youth, Cristóbal, Mendrugo, Iztlizúchil, and even the antagonist Axoténcalt, in the roles of potential loyal subjects, Vela creates a space for them within the monarchy. Though promoting an open acceptance of natives, Vela hesitates in wholeheartedly glorifying those who refuse to change their loyalties or traditions, an aspect evident in the allegorical meaning of Axolote. The inclusion of natives was a bold statement of Vela's day, especially when taking into account the previously discussed contextual circumstances within society.

The Bourbon King sought the incorporation of the natives into his monarchy for ideological, economical and political reasons. For the Bourbons,

streamlining the efficacy of the monarchy promoted the inclusion of the natives in the New World on two fronts. The first sought to politically reduce belligerent natives set on fighting the Spanish empire to loyal subjects and to "bring peace to the ragged edges of empire by replacing war with commerce" (Weber 9), while the second hoped to utilize the increase in loyal subjects to the monarchy's economic benefit.

The indigenous youth play a unique role in modeling the ideal subject, as well as in providing an ideal archetype for their relationship towards not only Cortés, but the monarch as well. Juan Pedro Viqueira Albán defines the ways in which modern subjects honor and respect their monarchy:

> Plebeians could contribute most to the greater good of society and their own, by maintaining themselves in the social position that fate had decreed for them and, within that position, training themselves to support actively the monarch's plans (38).

As defined by Cortés the primary role or plan of the conquest, in honor of Carlos V, was the conversion of the masses. As students of the friars, the Indian youth lovingly and honorably embraced their roles within the monarchy. They received education daily in order to increase their command over Catholicism and participate in the further conversion of other indigenous, including their parents. Through emphasizing the importance of gracious adherence of their roles as subjects, Vela was able to exemplify those who willingly participated for

the good of the whole; an important attribute of the model Bourbon subject. Through enlightenment, education and open acceptance to their roles, the youth, and in particular Cristóbal, became worthy subjects. Thus, the cohesive group of subjects working towards the same goal was meeting the goal of Cortés, and in turn the success of the monarchy. The specific function of the youth and its resulting benefits is noted in discussion between Cortés and the Spaniards about the accomplishment of the conversion project:

> CORTÉS. …Y en el colegio fundado,
> en que a los indios doctrina,
> es incesante el trabajo,
> pues acude su fatiga
> a enseñarlos a leer
> y a escribir, siendo infinita
> a la multitud que enseña.
> Y ya están en la doctrina
> los muchachos tan expertos,
> y en nuestra fe esclarecida
> tan firmes, que es un portento,
> pues hay niño que predica
> a sus padres que rebeldes
> están para recibirla…(II, 139)

While the role of the youth was designated from above, the students zealously welcomed their new part in the monarchy. As Mendrugo says, amongst these faithful students is "el hambre de saber" (II, 179) where "pan o semita poco importa" (II, 181-182). As previously mentioned, the exemplary student and subject are personified by Cristóbal, the son of Axoténcalt. His excitement and commitment to learning is emphasized through his dialogue. To Fray Martín he exclaims, "Totache, yo te suplico/ que me des a mí lección,/ pues con toda inclinación/ a aprenderla me dedico (1, 536-540). He excels in his studies and the missions of the Spaniards, thus fully participating in the betterment of the monarchy. In the words of Mendrugo, Cristóbal:

> …aprende que es maravilla.
> Ya la gramática sabe,
> y a su padre le predica;
> y los ídolos que tiene
> los desbarata, y los tira
> a escondidas de su padre….(II, 201-196)

Despite Cristóbal's exceptional capabilities and values he remains humble and a loyal subject as demonstrated by his interaction with his teacher Fray Martín:

> Bástame besar el suelo
> que pisas, maestro y padre,
> pues que mejor ser te debo

que al padre que me engendró

que si él me dio el ser que tengo,

té le diste ser al alma

y uno es mortal, y otro eterno. (II, 318-323)

Through providing education and enlightenment to their subjects and inspiring loyal vassals, Cortés was portrayed similar to "los gobernantes de la Ilustración"(Maravall 16), as those who seek to "elegir y preparar a personas cultas y virtuosas que se encargarán de transmitir en forma asimilable a los demás el mensaje de innovación de la vida en común" (Maravall 16). The mission which characterizes the youth as these symbolic messengers of reason is verbalized by Fray Martín when he notes that,

de los más nobles los hijos

quiero con rendido afecto

instruirlos en la fe.

Que como en la tierna cera,

con facilidad espera

mi celo que formaré

de católicos la forma;

que espero, del que se aplique,

que a sus padres les predique

y les explique su norma (1, 527- 536).

Results that confirmed the efficacy of this aspect of their program are noted by Mendrugo when he refers to the actions of Cristóbal, "y a su padre le predica;/ y los ídolos que tiene/ los desbarata, y los tira/ a escondidas de su padre…(2, 298-201). According to the three Spaniards, Martín de Calahorra, Alsonso de Estrada and Cortés, the effectiveness on a grander scale is noteworthy:

MARTÍN. Grande fruto ha conseguido
la apostólica doctrina
de aquestos siervos de Dios.
ALONSO. Y lo que más maravilla,
lo incansable de su celo,
pues cada día bautiza
cada uno más de dos mil,
sin que por esta fatiga
falten a lo doctrinal,
pues con esto hay quien predica
en un día seis sermones
por calles y por esquinas.
CORTÉS. Y los que están repartidos
por el reino dan noticia
del gran éxito que logran

por todas estas provincias. (II, 1-16)

Another prominent native character, Mendrugo or the "donado gracioso" (Personas, Vela), serves several different purposes in the play. Not only does his character bring humor into the work, but he also demonstrates that although the new way of life may not come as easily to some as it does to Cristóbal, there is still space and opportunity for him within the monarchy. Though the fictional Mendrugo differs significantly from the religiously virtuous Cristóbal, he still embodies many traits considered to be essential to a model Bourbon subject. Despite his struggle with the religious doctrine, the new ways of life that Christianity manifests and his lower social rank, he continuously seeks to improve his comportment as a good Christian and loyal subject. Though unfit for respected and honorable work concerning the word of God, his adherence to his social position as a warrior, though underappreciated amongst the friars, worked for the greater good in the end. His participation as a warrior allowed for Mendrugo to prosper in his own particular role within the monarchy. By providing a success story for a seemingly ignorant and foolish native and his inclusion into society, Vela is able to broaden the range of population to which the play might influence and emphasize among other things, the Bourbon priority of a "unity among all members…irrespective of their positioning within the social hierarchy" (Hill "Hierarchy" 129).

Upon Mendrugo's introduction into the play, his comedic and foolish

nature is apparent. Replying to Iztlizuchil's request that everyone give their hands to the friars he says,

> Quedo, quedo,
> que para todos habrá;
> a fe de lego, que temo
> que no me coman las manos,
> pues dicen que comen éstos
> los hombres, que se las pelan;
> ¡ay, que me ha arrancado un dedo! (1, 173-179)

The initial portrayal of Mendrugo serves the purpose of underscoring his nonsensical and backwards nature in order to exacerbate the degree of his maturation throughout the play. It also legitimizes the role that Christianity and conversion played in his enlightenment. The Spanish meaning of his name, crumb, emphasizes his contemporary insignificance within the community. Allegorically speaking, Mendrugo is only as valuable to the whole as a crumb is to a piece of bread. The meaning of Mendrugo's name also touches upon irony. His constant hunger and inability to satiate his appetite defines his early and innate character.

The second scene in which he appears with two other natives, his hunger blinds his morals and compels him to eat. He gives into his temptation and after taking a bite of the food offered to him by another Indian, he discovers

that the Devil has hidden a snake inside. Though Mendrugo was tempted by sin, the incident served as a learning experience for him. He reflects upon his actions by saying; "Esto es castigo porque/ no tengo templanza; padre/ fray Martín, socórreme" (1, 759-761). A later discussion between he and Fray Martín motivates him to change his ways:

> FRAY MARTÍN. Si no trata de templar
> hermano, la gula, entienda,
> si no conozco la enmienda,
> que el hábito ha de dejar…
> Pero si en aqueste clima,
> donde venimos a dar
> ejemplo con nuestro obrar,
> miran cuán poco se estima,
> ¿qué ejemplo ha de dar, hermano?
> MENDRUGO. Padre, como fui grumete
> el hambre cruel me acomete,
> pero yo me iré a la mano. (I, 811-827)

His continued difficulties span the play and serve to reiterate the contradictions between his fated social role and that of a holy counsel. In Act II, when approached by the Cortés in regards to his catechism class, he notes that, "Como hay viñas,/ que aunque fray Martín me ayuda,/ yo soy el que da salida/ a

los difíciles casos" (II, 165- 168).

It is not until part III when the Mendrugo's value to society surfaces. Though his devoutness and loyalty to Cortés and Christianity are apparent up to this point, his utility within society is not. In warning Fray Martín of his subsequent interaction with the angered Axoténcalt, Mendrugo offers up a knife for his protection:

> FRAY MARTÍN. ¿Cómo está tan distraído
> con armas?
> MENDRUGO. Es privilegio.
> FRAY MARTÍN. ¿Pues de dónde le ha venido?
> MENDRUGO. Es, padre, que en mi convento
> soy señor de horca y cuchillo.
> FRAY MARTÍN. Quite esas armas, hermano,
> que para mí fuera alivio
> morir a manos de infieles
> por la fe que adoro y sigo.
> MENDRUGO. Yo también, mas no les fuera
> muy barato mi martirio,
> porque muriera matando,
> como el doctor que en su oficio
> muera. (III, 382-396)

Later, with the physical safety of the Spaniards and the Christian natives in threat, Mendrugo's skills in war are be utilized for the benefit of the mission. A dialogue between Fray Martín and Fray Antonio demonstrates his advantage:

> FRAY MARTÍN. Él me pidió que le diera
> permiso; por conocer
> que tiene mucha experiencia
> en la mar, y es artillero,
> y como es tan justa empresa,
> se lo concedí
> FRAY ANTONIO. Es gallardo;
> y más el celo le esfuerza
> de católico, al hermano
> Mendrugo. (III, 921-930)

Mendrugo's desire to be a part of the monarchy and his loyalty served him well in the end. Viewers might note that his acceptance into society, even with his imperfections, was a product of his loyalty and his dedication to his role in society. Despite judgment by others, he didn't seek a position for which he wasn't meant. His struggle with sins and his apparent lack of utility for the society initially portrayed him as the antithesis of an ideal vassal, but through the aid of Christianity, Mendrugo was able to become more enlightened and mend his previous sinful ways.

Mendrugo's individual didactic portrayal entails what José Antonio Alzate y Ramírez, as cited by Juan Pedro Viqueira Albán, considered a good play during the period of Enlightenment in which, "'the intention is to correct the vices of men, those in which the recognized rule of morality are demonstrated, those in which the morality that corresponds to a Christian people is respected' such plays, he believed, 'should be accorded the status of real plays of a reformed theater and would serve either as a diversion or a corrective'" (35). By correcting his sinful vices, graciously accepting his role in society and participating in the success of the conversion process Mendrugo demonstrated that he too could embody the ideal traits of a Bourbon subject.

Axoténcalt, the primary antagonist of the play, provides both structural and ideological examples of enlightenment influence. His acceptance as innately evil is complicated by competing emotions his character elicits. Also, his insincere relationship with the Devil, in which he functions as a puppet, allows for his evil attributes to become unsubstantiated. The greater psychological depth attributed to Axoténcalt was characteristic of the theatrical realism influenced by the Enlightenment in which the characters no longer singularly represented "symbols of some virtue, vice or social group, but rather took on certain traits supposedly essential to humans" (Albán 73). In complicating the construction of his antagonist, Vela was able to evoke "pity and fear, the two emotions that classical and neoclassical tragedy sought to

induce in the spectator" (Hill "Hierarchy" 116), thus creating doubt in his genuine and innate depravity and sympathy for his maltreatment by the Devil. Furthermore, in the eyes of the audience, the force of the Devil "allows for the displacement of [Axoténcalt's]… wickedness…[which in turn]…leaves space for a future relationship in which, once the diabolical influence has been eliminated, [he]…can become a willing subject" (180). By faulting the Devil for Axoténcalt's transgressions, Vela models to the audience that even the most delinquent subjects are capable of changing their behavior and finding a place within the monarchy as loyal subjects.

Axoténcalt's capacity to elicit both pity and fear are immediately confronted upon his introduction into the play. In responding to Cortés' mission to convert the natives of the New World he displays honest doubt in their intentions due to his previous experiences with the conquest:

> Yo, famoso capitán
> Fernán Cortés, me dedico
> a obedecer tu mandato;
> mas permítame tu brío
> el preguntarte qué nuevos
> conquistadores has dicho
> son éstos, que han de obligarnos
> con sumisiones, benignos.

¿En esa España tu tierra,

imperio de Carlos Quinto,

hay gente benigna, afable?

Porque acá, por lo que he visto,

creí[a] que todos eran

tan soberbios, tan altivos,

como los que hemos tratado (I, 25-39).

While expressing doubt in the Spaniards intentions, he captures the pity of the spectators who are aware of this alternative historical reality in which "depictions of cruel, dagger-carrying Spaniards conquering Indians with dogs in a sea of blood" (Weber 6) characterized the conquest. The occurrence of this alternative armed conquest, and the justification for Axoténcalt's feelings towards the Spaniards is verified when Cortés recognizes the truth in his statement and admits to the historically harsh nature of the conquest. Though further development of Axoténcalt's character justifies Cortés' final words noting that physical violence was resorted to only as a final and necessary option, it immediately sets the stage for his dialectic nature.

Further sympathy is warranted for Axoténcalt when the audience learns of his function as a puppet for the Devil. While he genuinely believes that he is representing loyally his traditional Gods, he is only being fooled and taken advantage of. We learn of this relationship at the end of Act I when the

Demonio or Devil first enters the play and takes the guise of Izcóhualt, another native. In his own form he announces out rightly his intentions:

> …mas mis astucias poco han de poder,
> o tengo de sembrar y revolver
> con la cizaña mía
> odio en los pechos de esta monarquía
> contra estos remendados,
> hasta verlos rendidos y ultrajados… (I, 575- 580).

He continues to narrow his focus on Axotécult as a medium for his evil work when he notes that,

> Pero a Axoténcalt quiero decirle
> (pues su forma he tomado)
> que soy Izcóhualt, que escondido he estado
> en los montes oculto,
> que con él, el lograr no difículto
> la airada rabia mía;
> pero ya del concurso se desvía
> que es verdadero amigos mío éste,
> y siente mis agravios; mi odio apreste
> su sañuda venganza
> porque logre mi rabia su esperanza (I, 583-594).

Following this early profession, the spectators no longer view Axoténcalt as a symbol of vice, but rather feel sympathetic for his unfortunate role associated with the Devil. The continual influence played upon Axoténcalt by the Devil throughout the play exacerbates the pity felt for him, while his atrocious actions also earn him disgust. His final act that resulted in the completion of his fate was the highly influenced murder of his son Cristóbal. In Act III, immediately before throwing Cristóbal to the fire, Axoténcalt and Izcóhualt almost function as one. The direct influence of the Devil on Axoténcalt is no more apparent than in this dialogue in which they demand that Cristóbal renounce his God:

AXOTÉNCALT. Ahora veamos
si blasonas de tu esfuerzo.
IZCÓHUALT. Teme su horror.
CRISTÓBAL. ¡Cielo santo!
AXOTÉNCALT.¿Qué resuelves?
IZCÓHUALT. Obedece…
AXOTÉNCALT. Das adoración…
IZCÓHUALT. Postrado…
AXOTÉNCALT. A mis dioses…
IZCÓHUALT. A tu padre…
AXOTÉNCALT. O en el fuego…
IZCÓHUALT. [O] abrasado…

AXOTÉNCALT. Te he de echar

IZCÓHUALT. Has de morir.

AXOTÉNCALT.¿Qué resuelves?

IZCÓHUALT. Teme el daño (III, 723-732)

Later, the Devil clarifies his influential role when he fears that Axoténcalt might back out of the murder of his son:

(Aparte. Maldito sea el limitado

poder mío, pues no puedo

de tan gran bien apartarlo,

pero templaré a Axoténcalt,

porque no consiga el lauro) (III, 767- 771).

Again we note complexity in Axoténcalt's character following the death of his son at his own hands. Happening upon a moment of clarity he notes:

¡ay de mí, qué temor,

…qué miedo, pavor, o asombro

se me introduce en el pecho!

Detente, Cortés famoso,

no me mates, no me sigas,

que ya tu valor conozco.

Yo no he dado…yo no he sido

el verdugo, el fiero asombro

que ha dado muerte a su hijo (III, 842-850).

Despite his regret and melancholy partially incited by his fear of Cortés and his acknowledgement of his "castigo merecido" (III, 1052) the fate of Axoténcalt finds its justice in his death.

By refusing the validity of the knowledge made aware to him by the Friars, the Spaniards and his son Cristóbal, he refused his future role in the monarchy. Though capable, his rejection of the new way of life proscribed by the Christians, or the Bourbons symbolically speaking, resulted in his downfall. While "the dynamic of the Christian epic and the presence of the Devil allowed Spaniards to legitimize conquest as just war and permitted the forgiveness, or social integration, of the Other upon the victory of Christianity over paganism…(Cox Campbell 18), Axoténcalt's actions were too severe to forgive and at the request of his wife Mihuazóchil, and mother of Cristóbal, he was condemned to death.

Though Axoténcalt's physical fate was sealed with death, the ideological meaning of his character remained. His final words again clarified that without the negative influence of the Devil, he was able to reasonably assess the situation in which he was involved and openly accept his deserved fate, "La pena a que me condenas/ la tengo tan merecida, /que ni aun a pedir perdón/ mi arrepentimiento aspira" (III, 1181- 1184). His implied association with the Devil is further analyzed by Sarah Cox Campbell when she notes that, "The fact that

the…Indian adversary derives his alterity from Satanic influence means that, once freed of this influence, alterity is removed" (191). While under the negative influence of the Devil he worked against the mission of the Spaniards, and in turn the success of society. The removal of this diabolic pressure resulted in the unification of his opinion with that of the dominant Christian and Spanish view, in which his action warranted his punishment of death. The very potential inclusion of an antagonist is telling, yet as I have discussed, his complicated character represented more than just a vice. The fact that this character associated with the Devil was eliminated early in the Conquest period implies a disassociation with current natives allowing for an even more welcoming role in the new monarchy.

Throughout the play, Vela prepares an atmosphere of acceptance and equality for subjects willing to work for the greater good of society and redirect their loyalties to the Bourbon King. The antithesis of the ideal Bourbon subject is also portrayed by Vela and deserves discussion prior to moving onto the next section. Most notably recognized for the allegorical meaning behind his name, Axolote represents an indigenous character unwilling to accept the changes proposed by the Spaniards.

Axolote, as Mendrugo, serves a comical purpose within the play. His extreme indigenous characterization is emphasized through his broken Spanish. His name coincides with his identity in that it refers to a salamander

prevalent and unique to the region. His participation in the play is limited but he functions as an enabler to Mendrugo committing his sin of gluttony. His utility to society is negative and thus undesired by the Bourbon monarchy. By merely associating his extreme indigenous qualities with backwardness and sin, Vela is able to ideologically discourage embracing traditional identities and beliefs and to encourage participation in Bourbon society.

The Spaniards and Friars: Reimagining Bourbon Roles for the Church and Aristocracy

The attempt of the Bourbon monarchy to consolidate power under one rule, eliminate alterity and model ideal behavior was not exclusive to the indigenous. As previously mentioned, during the Habsburg reign drastic social hierarchies based under the power of elite families and the Church had come to characterize the political, social and economic scene of Spanish America. In order to consolidate power under the Bourbon monarch the elites and representatives of the Church were to be reigned in as well. In the words of Geoffrey Burn, in the eighteenth century, "The government had grown corrupt, the laws were in confusion, virtue had decayed, [and] religion was sunk in ritual. It was necessary to 'purify society,' to 'destroy the cancerous abuses,' to 'cut off gangrened limbs'" (Bruun 18). I argue that, rather than solely providing models of behavior for the Church and the elites themselves, the ideological construction of their characters sought to provide commoners, the very people

solidifying the maintenance of their illegitimate power, with the correct image of their placement in society. The construction of the Spaniards Alonso de Estrada, Martín de Calahorra and Friar Martín provided an avenue for this change.

Both Spaniards accompanying Cortés are assumed to be in positions of power, one as a governor of the region and the other as an accomplished soldier. Though realistically in seats of immense control, they are portrayed through Vela's work to be good citizens, yet dependent on Cortés and the monarchy. By depicting them as subordinates to the monarch, their authoritative legitimacy in the eyes of the viewers is equally reduced. No longer does their role carry the same weight as it had under the Habsburg monarchy. They, like all other characters in the play, function as an equal part of society in which their devotion to the well being of society defines their role as a model vassal.

Cortés always accompanies the presence of Alonso de Estrada and Martín de Calahorra in the play. Their consistent support and awe of Cortés favors an implied relationship of dependence and devotion. While Martín verbalizes his admiration for his leader, and thus implied loyalty through exclamation,"¡Oh, conquistador heroico/de santo celo encendido!" (I, 78-80), Alonso chooses a more direct approach; "Yo también, que gloria a Dios/soy cristiano, y muy de veras, /y vasallo muy leal…"(III, 494-493). The dependent and paternalistic

relationship between the Spaniards and Cortés is further elevated in Act III prior to battle when Cortés serves as the mediator of Alonso de Estrada's anger and impatience; "Pues que se arme de paciencia;/insigne Alonso de Estrada…" (III, 482-483). Later, Alonso's plan of attack is remedied by the more knowledgeable Cortés better suited for the leadership role. In the following dialogue, as well as in other similar interactions, the power of the elite is reduced and they are depicted as incapable of making authoritative decisions without the guidance of their leader or symbolic monarch Cortés. Vela inverts the characteristic relationship dynamic of the eighteenth century in which "the nobles stood between the people and the crown" (Bruun 17), by extracting the power of the noble and replacing it with that of the monarch:

ALONSO. Miren si yo dije bien;
vamos con las manos puestas
a pedirles que no ha hagan,
que es famosa diligencia.
CORTÉS. Alonso, los bergantines
que en México se reservan
para estos casos, se apresten…
…vos, Martín
de Calahorra, por la tierra,
con cien hombres estorbad

que de ella ampararse puedan…

yo y Estrada y lo más que resta

de españoles, les haremos

que vayan a dar las nuevas

al diablo…(III, 540-561).

Immediately after, Cortés again reaffirms his dominance by clarifying the priority of the attack in response to a recommendation from Martín:

MARTÍN. Mas antes,

vámosle a dar a Axoténcalt

las gracias de la merced

que hacernos quiere.

ALONSO. Eso es fuerza.

CORTÉS. Primero es el derrotarlos,

pues está ignorante de esta

novedad (III, 564-571).

This very action and implication of incompetence of the elites motivates commoners to switch their allegiance from the local leadership to the Bourbon monarch.

Another way in which Vela utilized the Spaniards was to promote the reduction of decadence. While the avarice and greed of the Spanish conquistadors was a defining characteristic of the Conquest according to many,

it did not bode well with the intentions of the Bourbon monarchy influenced by enlightenment thinking. In hindsight, the extreme decadence and social atmosphere of material wealth contributed to the downfall of the once successful Spanish Habsburg monarchy. In order to remedy this cancer in society and centralize the monarchy's resources, a social system that belittled the value of material wealth and decadence was promoted.

The presence of these values can be seen in both Martín and Alonso through their apparent and forthright value systems. The friars, their work and their reduced lifestyles elicit praise and admiration from both of the Spaniards. In discussing the conversion project amongst themselves, they verbalize where their concerns, values and priorities lie:

> MARTÍN. Grande fruto ha conseguido
> la apostólica doctrina
> de aquestos siervos de Dios
> ALONSO. Y lo que más maravilla
> lo incansable de su celo,
> pues cada día bautiza
> cada uno más de dos mil…(II, 1-9).

Later, Martín goes on to say:

> MARTÍN. ¿Y es menos, el acudir
> a la multitud crecida

de los muchachos que enseñan?

Y esto con la austera vida

que siguen, pues nunca comen

carne, siendo su comida

legumbres, la cama el suelo,

y una piedra dura y fría

por almohada, y cuando mucho

una tabla o una viga.

El vestido ya se ve,

descalzos, como se mira,

de cilicios rodeados,

que éstas son las galas ricas. (II, 17-30)

The ideological propaganda that depicted the elites as humble and unconcerned with material wealth aided in modeling ideal comportment for the masses. If the most powerful sector of society admired austerity, the commoners would soon follow and the culture in which material wealth dominated would eventually cease to exist.

While the portrayal of the Spanish elite subject in the Americas warranted rendering, so did that of the Church. Though the behavior and portrayal of Fray Martín does not differ significantly from the characterization of the saintly orders originally sent during the Conquest period to undertake the conversion

of the natives, it did conflict with the contemporary behaviors of the representatives of the Church. Geoffrey Bruun discusses the eighteenth-century renderings of the Church in his book *The Enlightened Despots;* "The religious institutions which the [Enlightenment] *philosophes* regarded so lightly were the dogmatic shells of a burned out faith. They lived in an age bankrupt of idealism and of spiritual values" (Bruun 14). While superficially adhering to the dogmatic shells of faith, they were engaging in the material wealth in the outside world. He goes on by giving an example, "Although the members were pledged to poverty they had long indulged in commercial ventures which brought the Society into discredit, for they used their privileges, especially in the American colonies, to extend their trading activities, and amassed enormous wealth" (Bruun 14).

The material and authoritative capacity of the Church was remedied in Vela's portrayal of Fray Martín. To reduce the societal and economic authority of the Church, Vela reimagined the role of Fray Martín to mimic that desired by the Bourbon monarchy in which, "The reformers…sought to…break the missionaries' monopoly over the lives, land and labor of mission Indians and limit the missionaries' responsibilities to the care of their spiritual lives alone" (Weber 43). By portraying him as an ideal Bourbon subject and missionary whose power is limited to, as Weber says, "their spiritual lives alone" (43), Vela is able to define the acceptable and unacceptable behavior of the Church. This

redefinition, as does the rest of the play, contained more contemporary value than historical, and depicted Fray Martín as a pious and unassuming individual that devotedly played his singular role in guiding the spirituality of his followers while also opposed to materialism and physical warfare. This depiction glorifies his genius in Christian servitude but also distances him from his capacity in authoritative roles in other sectors of society such as commerce and militaristic endeavors. By reducing his role to solely a religious one, Vela both reduces his jurisdiction and molds him into a model subject in which the success of his individual and focused achievements contribute to the well being of society.

In a poetic voice, Fray Martín included rhetorical devices of parallelism and hyperbaton while simultaneously referencing Neo-Platonism. He not only emphasizes his own humility and his proper role in relation to the State, but the symbolic role that Cortés represents as the Bourbon monarch:

> FRAY MARTÍN. ¡Oh, Cortés, cómo el Señor
> ha premiado el santo celo
> con que has recibido humilde
> sus ministros!, que si él mesmo
> hizo rey de Inglaterra
> a un miserable porquero
> que honró a un sacerdote suyo;

y al Magno Alejandro, en premio
del haberse arrodillado
en Jerusalén modesto
a otro, le dio todo el mundo…(I, 200-211)

His role in relation to Cortés is again emphasized when in response to a request by Cortés, Fray Martín asserts, "Soy hijo de la obediencia, /y así obedezco (II, 526-527). The ideological nature of Fray Martín's submissive comment demonstrates his personal acknowledgment and acceptance of his secondary authoritative role in relation to Cortés and to the monarchy.

Not only does Vela imply Fray Martín's obedience to the crown and his adherence to his role, but he also exemplified his faithfulness to his spiritual ways and his rejection of materialism. His initial presentation to the audience serves to lay the foundation for his character and the expectations of the Church in the Americas:

FRAY MARTÍN. Hijos y queridos míos,
no entendías que a aqueste reino
he pasado por la plata
que encierran sus minas dentro;
ni menos por pretender
mejorar fortuna, siendo
aquí más acomodado,

porque solamente vengo

a mirar por vuestro bien,

pues de él nace el mío a un tiempo,

sin pretender más riqueza

que este sayal que poseo

para vestir; que comer

a la providencia apelo,

que ésta no puede faltar,

que mi Dios se encarga de eso,

que los bienes de la tierra

se quedan acá en muriendo,

y las buenas obras sirven

de escala para ir al cielo;

éstas son solicitar

reduciros a los cierto (1, 330-352)

As we see later, in a dialogue with Izcóhualt the native utilized as a guise by the Devil, the strength of Fray Martín's obedience against temptation is essential to his line of work:

No te he respondido luego,

por resolver discursivo

lo que te he de responder;

y así, Izcóhualt, sólo digo
que cuando busqué sagrado
en el seráfico aprisco,
fue por renunciar los bienes,
que llaman allá en el siglo
a las riquezas caducas,
siendo reluciente vidrio
que deshace su brillar
al golpe que es más remiso.
Si yo intentara abundar
en vanos bienes impíos,
no hubiera elegido este
sayal tosco por aliño,
ni eligiera la pobreza
por tesoro más subido,
por recreo la clausura,
la obediencia por alivio,
la quietud por libertad,
y la humildad por lo altivo…(III, 275-296)

Fray Martín's harangue and response to Izcóhualt seems less of a fervent declaration than criticism of contemporary behavior of religious

representatives. He not only acknowledges a disconnection between materialism and spirituality, but he emphasizes the evil nature of decadence by associating it as a temptation of the Devil. For the contemporary audience, it is made apparent that the Church and missions were not only exercising power outside of their jurisdiction but they were associating themselves with the Devil and his practices by partaking in materialistic rather than spiritual endeavors. Through Fray Martín's ideal presentation, commoners were able to negatively reflect upon the current role of the Church and mold their expectations based on the example given. By reducing the Church's ideological and physical scope of power, the Bourbon monarchy could make room to fill the void.

Conclusion

Revamping the scholarly perception of the life and works of a 300-year-old playwright might seem to be a daunting task. Yet, in the case of Eusebio Vela, the normal routine of questioning former approaches and conclusions proved to be very minimal, a product that I argue is due to the overarching devaluation of works of the period. In providing a fresh approach, I hope to have strayed far from categorizing Vela amongst those works unworthy of academic attention that I claim other scholars have consequently done thus far in my analysis of Eusebio Vela and *Comedia nueva del apostolado.* Within this reevaluation, I felt it was necessary to provide a realistic and overarching portrayal of the social, political and historical circumstances affecting him, and those in which he was surrounded. In doing so, I sought to have correctly interpreted the ideological intentionality in which the model Bourbon society, vassal and King were portrayed to serve didactic purposes for the masses.

The very notion that Vela's plays, or any theatrical piece in general, contained ideological and didactic material, though generally accepted, does not go undisputed. For this very reason I have relied on José Antonio Maravall and his theoretical work *Política directiva en el teatro ilustrado* as a guide for approaching the content within *Comedia nueva del apostolado.* Ignacio de Luzán provided further guidance in assessing and defining enlightenment

characteristics within the play itself in his eighteenth-century work *La poética o reglas de la poesía en general y de sus principales especies*. While minding the content of these primary sources, the secondary work of other scholars such as Ruth Hill, Juan Pedro Viqueira Albán and Sarah Cox Campbell have aided in providing guidelines for approaching works of the eighteenth century from a similar vantage point.

Eusebio Vela and his works reflect the dynamic period in which he lived. My analysis has attempted to cleanly dissect his ideological intentions in accordance with their contemporary circumstances. I believe that Vela's overarching presentation of society reflects an ideal Bourbon society that, in reality, was quite radical. The communal participation for the betterment of society was not an aspect typical of the Habsburg dynasty. While the ideal community that Vela symbolically depicted did not necessarily materialize during the relatively short Bourbon reign of the eighteenth century, his play gives much insight into the priorities, perceived problems and solutions of his time. The indoctrination of Bourbon values that aided in promoting a societal cohesiveness and equality affected generations of New World inhabitants.

Vela produced work during a period in which diverse factions sought an ideological grasp of the masses. His ability to comply with the beliefs and rationales of multiple groups is evident in the content of his work. How much Vela prioritized the indoctrination of the masses in the new forward-thinking

Bourbon value system is up for debate. What we do know is that he absorbed and utilized enlightenment elements to economically and professionally streamline an outdated theater upon his arrival in Mexico. We can only imagine, after elucidating the ways in which his plot and character constructions emit Bourbon values, that the Enlightenment also influenced his ideological intentions. The results stemming from Vela's literary and ideological endeavors did not remain limited to the eighteenth century. The overarching changes to society promoted by the Bourbon monarchy and its supporters actually provided a foundation for the liberation manifestos that would eventually end the majority of Spainish rule in Latin America in the nineteenth century.

During his life, Vela most likely sought the same immediate thing that people have sought for generations, success. Yet, as scholars have consistently proven, success, as well as literary worth is subjective, and Eusebio Vela and many other authors and playwrights of the period have been neglected for this very phenomena. Only in eliminating the bias associated with works of the period, and approaching them in a new light, can we begin to appreciate Vela's work for its current, contemporaneous and historical value.

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