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A COMPANION TO THE

LITERATURES OF COLONIAL AMERICA

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EDITED BY SUSAN CASTILLO AND IVY SCHWEITZER

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Toward a Cultural Geography of Colonial American Literatures: Empire, Location, Creolization

Ralph Bauer

From the Colonial "Period" to Colonial "Regions"

As the editors of the Blackwell anthology *The Literatures of Colonial America* (2001), Susan Castillo and Ivy Schweitzer, observe, American studies has undergone a "paradigm shift" in recent years from which the study of early American literature has not remained immune. To be sure, as Castillo and Schweitzer point out, this paradigm shift has in part been due to the influence of the multiculturalist movement on colonial American literary studies, which has effected an unprecedented expansion of the canon to include not only African American, Native American, and women writers, but also new geocultural areas, such as Florida, California, and New Mexico. The multiculturalist paradigm of early American literature found one of its culminations with the various incarnations of the *Heath Anthology of American Literature*. As the general editor of that anthology, Paul Lauter, sensibly remarked, many of the "works from the half-continent that was then Spanish America and later texts concerned with similar issues of religion and politics" had previously been "dismissed as outside the bounds of literary study (Lauter 1998: xxxiii). The *Heath* therefore also included texts by writers such as Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, Pedro de Castañeda, and Gaspar de Villagrà, along with the traditional representatives of the early US American canon, such as John Smith, William Bradford, or Benjamin Franklin, thus presenting a more diverse mosaic of early American literature than any literary anthology before.

However, its cultural inclusiveness notwithstanding, in its exclusive geographic focus on those colonial territories that would later become the United States, the multiculturalists' metanarrative of early American literary history has been caught in a critical anachronism. As one outspoken critic of the proto-nationalist paradigm in early American literary studies has pointed out "No one wrote in what has been called

'the future United States,' a future that did not exist until it was a past" (Spengemann 1994: 49). Indeed, by including Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's *Relación* but not Las Casas' *Historia de las Indias*, Pedro Menéndez de Avilés' letter from La Florida but not Cortés' *Cartas* from Mexico, or Villagrà's epic *Historia de Nueva Mexico* (about New Mexico) but not Ercilla's epic *La Araucana* (about Chile) based on the rationale that each of the former dealt with a territory that would later form a part of the United States while each of the latter did not, such a paradigm forecloses on an understanding of these texts within their proper intellectual, historical, literary contexts. Colonial American texts themselves are of interest in this paradigm primarily as a source or "first" in a literary tradition that came later. Thus, Cabeza de Vaca's narrative, for example, is seen as a "first in the US tradition . . . [a] mestizo voice speaking for the first time from what is now the US literary tradition. His text both narrates and incarnates the process of becoming something new we now call American" (Bruce-Novoa 1998; cf. Bruce-Novoa 1990). More disturbingly perhaps, anthologies engaged in such a US proto-nationalist paradigm have tended to eclipse colonial Spanish American literatures during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as the literatures of the nineteenth-century American nation-states, thereby running the risk of reinforcing US American ideas of exceptionalism and manifest destiny, according to which the history of entire colonial North America culminates in the foundation of the United States. The literary history of the Ibero-American colonies and nation-states, by contrast, vanishes into thin air after the initial European discoveries and conquests have been completed – as though touched by Hegel's nineteenth-century "spirit" of history. In this time-honored narrative of successive periods of American history, Native Americans "inhabited" America, Italian explorers (such as Columbus, Vespucci, Verrazano, or Cabot) "discovered" America, Spaniards (such as Cortés or Díaz del Castillo) "conquered" America, Englishmen (such as Smith or Bradford) "settled" America, and (US) Americans (such as Franklin or Barlow) "founded" the America nation-state.

To be sure, the anachronisms pointed out above in the multiculturalist metanarrative of early American literature would apply to *any* literary history of the colonial Americas written within a particular national context, as the history of European colonialism in the New World, while intimately related to the history of modern nationalism, was essentially still transnational (or more accurately pre-national) in nature. Cortés' letters from Mexico, for example, were translated into (and published in) virtually all Western European languages and inspired not only subsequent Spanish conquerors, such as the Pizarros in Peru or Pánfilo de Narváez in La Florida, but also English explorers such as Sir Walter Raleigh or Thomas Harriot. By the same token, Italian, English, or Dutch travel collections, such as Giambattista Ramusio's *Navigazioni et viaggi* (1556), Samuel Purchas' *Hakluytus Posthumus* (1625), or Alexandre Esquemeling's *The Buccaneers of America* (1681), were read not only in Protestant countries but also in Spain and New Spain, official censorship and bans notwithstanding.

From this point of view, the editors of *The Literatures of Colonial America* have proposed a model of "colonial American literature" that goes importantly beyond the

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multiculturalist reconfigurations of the proto-nationalist metanarrative. Their stated aim is to bring together "texts from diverse linguistic and cultural traditions which could be used for *transnational* analysis." While some parts of the anthology are still "organized chronologically," others juxtapose texts "according to *region*" (Castillo/Schweitzer 2001: xvi–xvii; my emphasis) – the various colonies comprising British America, Spanish America, and French America. The editors hereby invite the reader to investigate what "colonial" and "American" meant in each "regional" context throughout the hemisphere and, ultimately, to theorize "colonial literature" in the Americas comparatively. Significantly, "colonial," in this sense, suggests not so much a category of time (that which came before the "national" period) but rather a category of space (a set of particular locations within the larger context of transatlantic empires). In other words, "colonial" is used here not as a category of history – the study of cultural change across time – but rather of geography – the study of cultural diversification across space.

But how can a cultural region or literary tradition in the Americas be "colonial" from the point of view of geography? This essay is intended to explore the implications that the conceptual vocabulary and methodologies of the discipline of cultural geography might hold for literary history in general and for the comparative study of colonial American literatures in particular. The following section reviews some of the basic concepts and developments in cultural geography; the succeeding section takes the case of vice-regal New Spain as a historical example of how a "colonial region" might be understood in terms of cultural geography; and the final section provides a discussion of two prose narratives from New Spain – Bernal Díaz del Castillo's *Historia verdadera* and Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora's *Infatigables de Alonso Ramírez* – in light of the concepts of cultural geography.

The Geography of Cultural Diversity in the Colonial Americas

A heterogeneous discipline that has often been "deeply intertwined with empire building" (Crang 1998: 59), cultural geography can be loosely described as comprising three major established lines of inquiry: the investigation of the interactions between the natural environment and human culture; the diversification of human culture across space as a result of demographic migration, cultural diffusion, and intercultural exchange; and the cognitive or symbolic ordering of space through human culture and ideologies (see Wagner 1994; Hugill and Foote 1994). The first line of inquiry harks back to at least the sixteenth century, with the Spanish natural histories of the New World such as José de Acosta's *Historia natural y moral* (1590), and perhaps even to the Roman tradition of Strabo (ca. 63 BC–AD 24). In modern times, the origins of cultural geography are often associated with the rise of the so-called "Berkeley school" that formed during the first half of the twentieth century around the work of geographer Carl Sauer (1889–1975). Sauer and his followers critiqued determinist theories in classical cultural geography, whose Eurocentric bias

still prevailed, such as Ellen Semple's climatic environmental determinism (see Sauer 1969) and other (see Sauer 1969) temperate region cultural and economic determinism. In order to do this work, the environmental determinist challenged the basic factual basis of the substantial divergence of mental regional geography (the cultural geography from the tradition proper). He defined cultural "region" as the association of form and function.

Sauer's special theory divided into two cultural regions. He argued, cannot be Valley before the encountered in the and surplus extracted developed division extraction on the Spanish arrived in already been laid derived from his important implications. Sauer's approach, and Zelinsky have from (1986) investigated Zelinsky (1973) of North America.

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still prevailed during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as geographers such as Ellen Semple posited simple causal connections between the physical and climatic environment on the one hand and the development of human culture on the other (see Sauer 1962: 317). For example, these earlier theories had held that the temperate regions in the Northern hemisphere had "naturally" achieved greatest cultural and economic development because the climate forced people there to work in order to eke out an existence, whereas in the tropics, where people had no need to work, the environment caused people to be lazy. Sauer and his followers, by contrast, challenged not only the imperialist ideology underlying such theories but also the basic factual accuracy of such monolithic explanations, calling attention to the substantial diversity and complexity of cultures in any given climactic and environmental region. He hereby aligned himself with the empirical tradition of "chorography" (the empirical description by travelers) that has been an integral aspect of geography from Strabo to Alexander von Humbolt, rather than with the geographical tradition proper of Ptolemy (the mathematical and rationalist mapping of the world). He defined cultural geography as "the art of seeing how land and life have come to differ from one part of the earth to another." He therefore proposed the "cultural region" as the basic spatial unit of close analysis, "an area made up of a distinct association of forms, both physical and cultural" (ibid: 105, 321).

Sauer's special field of expertise was in pre-and post-conquest New Spain, which he divided into two basic cultural landscapes: the central/southern and the northern cultural region. The colonial culture that formed in post-conquest New Spain, he argued, cannot be understood in isolation from the cultural patterns in the Central Valley before the European conquest. The highly developed cultures the Spaniards encountered in the Central Valley, marked by intensive maize production with trade and surplus extraction that sustained a hierarchical urban lifestyle with a highly developed division of labor, enabled the Spanish to set up a colonial system of surplus extraction on the back of the Aztec system already in place. Thus, at the time the Spanish arrived in Mexico, the basic patterns of subsequent cultural development had already been laid (Sauer 1966, 1971). Although Sauer's own particular empirical data derived from his study of pre-and post-conquest New Spain, his approach had important implications for the study of the colonial Americas at large. Building on Sauer's approach, subsequent cultural geographers such as Donald Meinig and Wilbur Zelinsky have investigated other cultural regions in the Americas. Thus, Meinig (1986) investigated the development of French Acadian colonial cultures, while Zelinsky (1973) (and later William Cronon 1983) investigated the eastern seaboard of North America.

But the interactions between the natural environment and human cultures constitute only one field of interest for cultural geographers. Another is the question of how cultures change through interregional cultural contact, exchange, and migration. In classical cultural geography, the contact between various groups of Europeans, Native Americans, and (later) Africans in the Americas has often been described in terms of "cultural diffusion," as technologies of agriculture, warfare, or print, as well as

religions, ideologies, or literary traditions, traveled across space, competing with, replacing, or mixing with local traditions. Before the recent advent of ethnohistory, the diffusionist model was also the dominant paradigm among comparative historians of the early Americas who saw the various colonial cultures developing in the Americas largely in terms of an "expansion" or "fragmentation" of the various European cultures in the New World canvas (see Crosby 1992; Hartz 1946). As they pointed out, the differences between the colonial societies developing in Spanish and British America, for example, must be seen in light of the fact that Catholic Spain's imperial enterprise was, from the very beginning, of an entirely different nature from that of Protestant England, as Spanish conquerors, inspired by the recent reconquest of Spain from the Moors, saw themselves as aristocratic hidalgos who displayed an active interest in the mineral resources of the New World and in its peoples (as new vassals of the crown, as objects of religious conversion, and as tribute labor in their services), while the English were looking primarily for land which could be settled by their own people and considered the Natives hereby mainly as an obstacle (see Seed 1995).

More recently, however, the diffusionist paradigm has come under intense scrutiny and criticism, both in cultural geography and in comparative history. Especially in the context of the decolonization of the so-called "Third World" after World War II, cultural geographers have questioned the assumption that culture "diffuses" from core donor cultures such as Europe (which was often supposed to be somehow "naturally" inventive, progressive, and culturally superior) into the peripheral regions, such as the Americas (which were often presumed to be "naturally" imitative, backwards, and culturally inferior) (see Blaut 1994). Cultural geographers during the late twentieth century therefore aimed to articulate more nuanced models of cultural exchange in the New World "contact zones." They hereby borrowed from cultural anthropologists such as Paul Radin, Sidney Mintz, and Fernando Ortiz, who critiqued both the older "assimilationist" models, which theorized how migrant cultures "adapted" to new environments, as well as the so-called "retentionist" models (proposed most prominently in the early twentieth century by the anthropologist Melville Herskovitz). Instead, they proposed models of "culturation" or "transculturation," as well as "creolization," that theorized the formation of new cultures as a product of cultural contact and exchange (see Radin 1966; Mintz 1992; Ortiz 1987).

Consequently, the formation of the diverse societies in the colonial Americas has come to be understood in terms of various kinds of "culture regions," each of which are subject to particular environmental, demographic, and social factors. Cultural geographers generally distinguish between three different conceptual types of culture regions: formal, functional, and vernacular. Thus, a formal region comprises communities that share a common cultural trait (such as language), a functional region comprises communities that are held together by a political or administrative structure, and a vernacular region, finally, comprises a particular culture commonly *perceived* as sharing a distinct identity, often due to particular environmental, geographic, demographic, or cultural features. For example, a given English settlement in colonial Pennsylvania may share the same "formal" region with an English town in England but not with a German settlement in Pennsylvania; with that German

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settlement, it would, however, share a "functional" region (i.e., the administrative, governmental, and legal structure of the colonial government or of the British Empire). By contrast, as a "vernacular" region, this English town in Pennsylvania may be distinct from its counterpart in England, possibly due to its cultural interchanges with the German settlement with which it is in close topographic proximity. Investigating the complex overlay between these various types of cultural "regions," as well as the interplay between variable landscapes and cultures, and the multi-directional processes of intercultural diffusion and creolization, cultural geographers have charted a highly variable series of culturally hybrid "contact zones" that developed in the Americas as a result of European colonization (Crang 1998: 20; see also Jordan-Bychkov and Momosh 1997: 7-14; Wagner and Mikesell 1962).

The increasing self-reflexiveness among cultural geographers about the ideological underpinnings of their time-honored scientific models has given rise also to a new, third school of inquiry into the symbolic and cognitive aspects of the human geographical imagination. Particularly in postmodern cultural geography, scholars have begun to investigate the moral, ethical, and ideological values that cultures attribute to particular landscapes and cultural regions, including the cultural differences that originate with the particular process of cultural diffusion, mixture (*mestizaje*), and creolization. Thus, whereas the first landmark retrospective assessment of the state of the field of cultural geography, Wagner and Mikesell's *Readings in Cultural Geography* (1962), was still primarily concerned with the question of how human culture shaped the natural environment, the second landmark retrospection, Foote et al.'s *Re-Reading Cultural Geography* (1994), paid tribute to this new current by including a section of essays devoted to the question of "what the world means" (pp. 291-398). One particularly prominent force in this "humanistic" and self-reflexive turn within cultural geography has been the rise of postcolonial cultural studies across the disciplines, under the influence of which cultural geographers have begun to investigate the ideologies underlying not only the modern discipline of classical cultural geography specifically, but also human conceptual ordering of space more generally (see Shurmer-Smith 2002; Said 1978; Soja 1989; Lefebvre 1991; Minca 2001; Benko and Strohmayer 1997; also Doel 1999).

Although, in praxis, postmodern cultural geography has more typically been concerned with the study of the symbolic ordering of modern urban spaces, while postcolonial studies have mainly been concerned with British colonialism in India and Africa during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the postcolonial and poststructuralist inquiry into a "triple dialectic of space, time, and social being" and the "relations between history, geography, and modernity" (Soja 1989: 12) holds significant implications also for colonial American studies in general and for understanding the distinct evolution of literary genres in the various cultural regions of the colonial Americas in particular. For, obviously, there is nothing "natural" about the colonial status of a particular region; rather, such a status is the product of particular geographic ideologies and spatialized systems of power, which, in turn, shape regional economies and cultures, as well as physical landscapes. Why is it, for example, that the creature of the "contact zone," the *mestizo* – though a persistent presence in much

of colonial Spanish American literature – is often perceived as an untrustworthy conman, as is, for example, the narrative character of Concolorcorvo in Alonso Carrió de la Vandra's *Lazarillo de ciegos caminantes* or the "gaucho" in Domingo Faustino de Sarmiento's *Facundo*? A cultural geography of colonial American literature would investigate both how colonial American texts make sense of space and how literary formations are structured by space. As Michael Crang (1989: 44) notes, "Geography and literature are both writings about places and spaces. They are both processes of signification, that is, processes of making places meaningful in a social medium." In the remaining sections of this essay, I would like to illustrate this point by taking as an example the literature of Sauer's region of expertise: vice-regal New Spain.

Landscapes of Power in Vice-Regal New Spain

In order to understand the geographically distinct evolution of colonial literary genres in the multiple cultural regions of the colonial Americas, it is necessary to place colonial texts not only in a comparative hemispheric geographical context but also in the transatlantic geographic context of their respective imperial realms. In other words, it is necessary to investigate the environmental, economic, social, and ideological dynamics that produce the "colonial location" of a given text within the cultural geography of empire. As literary historians of colonial Spanish America have recognized, colonial narrative originates with the Spanish chronicles of the Discovery and Conquest, such as Cortés' *Cartas de Relación* and López de Gómar's *Historia de la Conquista*. These histories were profoundly informed by the experience and ideology of the Christian reconquest of Spain from the Moors, in which the Christian knights were rewarded for their military services and loyalty with feudal estates in Al-andalus, the former Moorish province that held out until the final fall of Granada in 1492. The conquerors of America during the early sixteenth century, though often of humble background, understood their quests in similar terms and were initially rewarded by the monarch with neo-feudal grants of Native tribute labor, called *encomienda*. The language of the *reconquista* in the Old World served hereby as a metaphor for translating the conquest of the New World in a way that supported the conquerors' social aspirations as a neo-feudal aristocracy. It is in this context that Cortés' descriptions, in his second letter to Charles V, of Tenochtitlan's buildings as "mosques" must be read (Cortés 1986: 85). However, the Habsburg crown, which had been able to expand its absolutist power in Europe in part by using the "royal fifth" it received from each of the conquerors' exploits in the New World for crushing the political autonomy of local municipalities and aristocratic houses in Spain itself, soon became suspicious of the apparent resurgence of feudal power in the New World and began a political campaign aimed at the centralization of administrative authority over the conquered territories in the New World. Cortés himself was eventually supplanted as the supreme authority over Mexico by royal bureaucrats (*audiencia*) and the vice-regal court that were sent by the Crown. Also, the neo-feudal

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institution of *encomienda* came increasingly under political assault by imperial officials – an assault that was aided also by the public campaigns of clerics such as Bartolomé de Las Casas, who (often rightly) indicted the “injustice” of the conquest and the “cruelty” of the Spanish *encomenderos* in their treatment of the Indians (see Brading 1991).

Although the Crown had to negotiate on several occasions with the conquerors in complicated legal battles regarding its long-term plans to revoke the *encomiendas* that it had originally granted to individual conquerors and their heirs “in perpetuity,” the passing of the so-called New Laws during the 1540s effected the gradual replacement of the *encomienda* with a compromise solution – the *repartimiento*, a rationed and rotational recruitment system that essentially divided the available Native labor between the conquerors and the vice-regal government (see Gibson 1964: 222–4; also Sauer 1966). In the Central Valley of Mexico, this transformation was in part also driven by the vice-regal government’s increasing demand for Native labor in order to undertake grand architectural projects, such as the construction of huge dykes and the *deagüe* (drainage system), especially after several devastating floods during the 1550s. While flooding had already been a problem in pre-conquest times and had prompted the construction of dams, the threat of flooding was perceived as more acute by the Spanish population, whose lifestyle was further removed from the amphibious living and *chinampa* (floating island) agriculture of the Aztecs. Consequently, courses of rivers and streams were shifted and new dykes were constructed, which required vast amounts of lumber and labor.

This system of dual exploitation by rationing and rotating labor, however, had devastating consequences on the Indian communities, further aggravating the demographic collapse in the Native population already begun by the introduction of European diseases. When, as a result, the declining available labor force failed to meet the demands made on it by the various sectors of rapidly growing white society by the end of the sixteenth century, the *repartimiento* system came under increasing criticism from the clergy and imperial officials as one of “compulsion and abuse” (Gibson 1964: 233). By and by, it lost support and was formally abolished in 1632, being replaced by the institution of *hacienda*, a proto-capitalist rural estate based on recompensated Indian labor on large lots of privately owned land typically acquired with currency from the Crown by wealthy merchants and bureaucrats residing in the cities (see Mörner 1973: 185; Gibson 1964: 323–6). While *encomienda* had depended on an indigenous population without radical change in its traditional methods of production (in effect perpetuating the system of tribute labor initiated by the Aztecs), *hacienda* was based on the availability of the cheap labor of a rural proletariat whose productivity was governed not by the immediate needs of the regional population but assimilated to a European tradition of agriculture in an expanding transatlantic market. Thus, traditional Indian communities were destroyed and populations further declined, causing the social demise also of the neo-feudal class of the conquerors, who had lived off the labor of the Indians they had held in *encomienda* in a neo-feudal household economy.

In part due to these internal environmental and social developments and in part due to an increasingly aggressive imperial policy, the former estate economy of New

Spain was increasingly becoming an economic colony of Castile. Despite the implementation of vice-royalties and *audiencias* in the Americas (intended to decentralize the political administration of an enormous transoceanic empire), political authority was in effect concentrated in Spain, mainly in Seville, with the *Consejo de Indias* (Royal Council of the Indies) presiding over all legislation and the *Casa de Contratación* (Board of Trade) controlling all commercial activities in the Americas. By royal decree, the colonies were prohibited from trading with foreign nationals and colonial manufacturing was severely restricted, which considerably inhibited economic development in the colonies. Spain hereby aimed to eliminate the threat of competition from its own colonies, while securing a market for its products. Industry and manufacture were supposed to remain in Spain, with the colonies merely providing metals and raw materials that would be exchanged for finished products via the fleet (see Haring 1947).

During the last decades of the sixteenth century, shrinking economic opportunities in New Spain had driven colonial merchants to look elsewhere for advancement. They found these opportunities, in accordance with time-honored tradition, by looking west – in the Pacific trade in Chinese fabric and Peruvian minerals. Soon enough, Mexican merchants had cornered most of the South American textile market, thereby dealing a severe blow to the textile manufacturers of Spain, particularly the silk producers of Toledo and Granada, who sorely missed the Peruvian silver that now went to China. So thriving had the Mexican Pacific trade become that it was regarded, as Jonathan Israel has written, as a “serious menace” to the Spanish economy by imperial officials in Seville and Madrid. The Crown therefore launched a series of attacks on the Mexican Pacific trade, first stipulating that no more than three ships with a maximum weight of 400 tons each be allowed to sail between Mexico and Peru annually and forbidding the carrying of any Oriental fabrics on the way there and that of gold on the way back, and finally, in 1639, suspending all trade between Mexico and Peru indefinitely. This plunged New Spain into a severe economic crisis that lasted through much of the seventeenth century (see Israel 1975: 99–101).

The gradual but steady erosion during the sixteenth century of the neo-feudal lifestyle that the conquerors deemed as their “right” and as essential to their sense of identity as a New World aristocracy, in general, and the Crown’s active political involvement in this process in particular (such as the passing of the New Laws), led to serious resentment, social unrest, and even open rebellion throughout the Spanish Americas, as in the cases of the *conjuración* of Martín Cortés, the Conqueror’s son, in Mexico, or the insurrection of Gonzalo Pizarro in Peru. In 1561, Lope de Aguirre wrote a letter to Philip II, in which he angrily reminded the monarch that “For 24 years now I have served you in Peru, conquering Indians, founding towns, and fighting battles in your name, always to the best of my power and ability.” He charged that “I firmly believe, most excellent King and lord, that to me and my companions you have been nothing but cruel and ungrateful,” vowing to “rebel until death against you for your ingratitude” and declaring his independence from the Spanish monarchy (in Moreno 1961: 84).

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Not surprisingly, such challenges to the imperial authority caused considerable concern for the Crown, as well as for imperial functionaries and ecclesiastic officials. How could the transformation of loyal Spaniards into insubordinate rebels in America be explained? Soon theories emerged that the conquerors' and creoles' insubordination must be due to the influences of the unruly environment and climate of the New World. "I do not marvel at the great defects and imbecility of those who are born in these lands," the Franciscan missionary and ethnographer Bernadino de Sahagún wrote in the 1580s,

because the Spaniards who inhabit them, and even more those who are born there, assume these bad inclinations; those who are born there become like the Indians, and although they look like Spaniards, in their constitution they are not; those who are born in Spain, if they do not take care, change within a few years after they arrive in these parts; and this I think is due to the climate or the constellations in these parts. (Sahagún 1938 III: 82; see also Lavallé 1993; Mazzotti 2000)

Geocultural theories such as this one were quickly used to rationalize the systematic exclusion of the creoles from prominent positions in the new vice-regal order of power. In all of its more than 300-year history, there was not a single viceroy in New Spain who was of Mexican birth; only two archbishops of Mexico had been American born; and all of the judges presiding over the Audiencia of Mexico had been European-born Spaniards, despite a petition by the Mexican City council in 1637 demanding that at least half of the seats should be reserved for American-born creoles. In the course of the sixteenth century there developed "a social, cultural, and even ethnic dimension to the estrangement between bureaucracy and colonists in that the former was staffed mainly by peninsulars while the latter were predominantly creole" (Israel 1975: 88).

The Cultural Geography of Colonial Narrative in New Spain: From Bernal Díaz to Alonso Ramírez

The social marginalization of the creoles, resulting from the environmental, demographic, economic, and political changes taking place in New Spain during the course of the sixteenth century, is a persistent theme in colonial New Spanish (as well as in Spanish American) narrative, from Bernal Díaz del Castillo's *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* (1632) to Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora's *Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez* (1690). While, certainly, there are important differences between these two texts – including a temporal difference of about a century and a difference in the conception of historiographic authorship (the latter being a collaboration of two authors) – their formal, ideological, and epistemological continuities and distinctiveness *vis-à-vis* their peninsular counterparts – the chronicles of the Discovery and Conquest and the picaresque novel, respectively – point to the role that cultural geography plays in the divergent evolution of literary traditions in peripheries and centers of early modern transoceanic empires. In particular, the primary importance accorded to eye-witness testimony in both narratives serves as a rhetorical springboard for a colonial critique that

unmasks the contradictions of Spanish imperial patrimonialism by exposing the unequal status of the creoles' citizenship.

Bernal Díaz (ca. 1492–1584) was a commoner when he left his native Andalusía and when he set out from the Caribbean base in Cuba as a foot soldier in Cortés's army in 1519 in order to conquer the western *tierra firme*. He wrote his *Historia verdadera* only many years later in the form of his personal memoirs and did not, in fact, finish it until 1568, when he was already an old man and had established himself as an *encomendero* in Guatemala (see Himmerich y Valencia 1991: 150–5). His history was never published during his lifetime and appeared only well into the seventeenth century, in Madrid in 1632 – the same year that the *repartimiento* system was formally abolished in the Spanish Americas and almost three decades after the publication of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605) in Spain. By that time, the conqueror of new worlds had become something of a quaint anachronism, a tragicomic figure of fun and fiction at a time of conscript armies, mercantilist economics, and absolutist monarchies.

The widely popular early parts of Bernal's *Historia verdadera* dramatically related the journey from Cuba to Mexico, the skirmishes during the advance on Tenochtitlan, the Spaniards' initial entry into the legendary Aztec city, the subsequent battles, the *noche triste* of the Spaniards' retreat, and the final fall of the city in 1521. It thereby purported to present an unofficial, though more "true," history in counter-distinction to the official histories written by the Spanish imperial court historians, who had appropriated Las Casas' condemnation of the conquest. While Gómara and Las Casas had each positioned themselves on opposite poles in the political and legal debates at Valladolid during the early 1550s over the question of whether Spain's military conquests in the New World had been a "just war" and whether the conquerors had a right to enslave the conquered peoples, Bernal, writing two decades later, gave voice to a distinct tenet of local patriotism in New Spain: the defense of the "rights" of the conquerors and their descendants to the spoils of the conquest during the newly emerging debate over the question of whether the royal grants of *encomiendas* and honors to the original conquistadors were hereditary; as well as the claim that the rewards of the conquest had not been equally distributed among the all participants from the beginning. But while Bernal thereby sided with the lawyers of the conquerors on the question of the justness of the wars, he also bitterly refuted López de Gómara, who had glorified Cortés' miraculous individual achievements. By contrast, Bernal emphasized the collective nature of the conquest of Mexico, which would have been impossible, he argues, without the bravery of the common soldiers such as himself. With characteristic metahistorical irony Bernal debunks López de Gómara's providentialist account of Cortés' magical victories in his *Historia de la conquista de México* (1552), rewriting it as a story of hardship and toil. He critiques, for example, the Renaissance historian's story of the miraculous appearance of Santiago in the midst of battle in support of the Spaniards, remarking that he, "como pecador, no fuese digno de verlo" [a sinner, must not have been worthy enough to witness it]:

And if it had been as Gómara said, we would have been bad Christians indeed, who when God sent us his apostles did not every day after acknowledge and return thanks

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and pay reverence to the church, and please God; and would to heaven that it were so, but until I read his history, I had never heard of it. (Díaz del Castillo 1980: 56)

By the same token, he asserts that the credit for converting the Indians belongs not to the monks but solely "a nosotros los verdaderos conquistadore, que lo descubrimos y conquistamos" (ibid: 479). In his strongly polemical account, Bernal explicitly and specifically set out to refute Las Casas' versions on strategic points of contention, such as the infamous Cholula massacre, which was not, he argued, the result of the proverbial "cruelty" of the conquerors, as the Dominican monk had claimed, but rather the just punishment of the Natives for their cruel practice of human sacrifice:

Let us anticipate and say that these were the great cruelties that the Bishop of Chiapas, Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, wrote about and never ceased talking about, asserting that for no reason whatever, or only for our pastime and because we wanted to, we inflicted that punishment, and he even says it so artfully in his book that he would make those believe, who neither saw it themselves nor know about it, that these and other cruelties about which he writes were true (as he states them) while it is altogether the reverse of true. It did not happen as he describes it. (Ibid: 150-1)

Throughout his history Bernal therefore aimed to refute the learned Dominican "señor obispo" with the rhetoric of first-hand and eyewitness experience. In his claim of writing a history more "true" than those written both by Las Casas and Gómara, Bernal ostensibly professed a self-consciousness and humility about his lack of eloquence, his provincialism, and his humble social standing within the imperial order that is self-consciously in opposition to the elevated Renaissance prose style of López de Gómara's historiographic rhetoric. Remembering two Peninsular *licenciados* who had asked to inspect the manuscript of his history in order to see how it differed from the works of Gómara, he ironically remarks, "y yo les presté un borrador. Parecióme que de varones sabios siempre se pega algo de su ciencia a los sin letras como yo soy" [I accordingly presented them with a draft for their study with the respect that is due, it seemed to me, to scholars from illiterates such as me] (ibid: 590-1). Bernal self-consciously assumes here the humble role of a provincial *pícaro* who turns his professed lack in classical eloquence into a powerful rhetorical tool to authenticate the "truth" value of what we might call his colonial counter-history to the imperial history of the conquest (see Adorno 1992). As far as its "retórica," the *licenciado* finds his history most agreeable, written

in the colloquial style of speaking used in Old Castile, which is most agreeable these days, for it lacks the flowery reasoning and golden politeness in which writing is commonly dressed, and beneath which truth is locked up by pretty words. (Ibid: 591)

Despite their praise for Bernal's non-literate, colloquial style, however, the *licenciados* also criticized him for arrogating to himself too many "judgments," especially in his praise of himself, which he should have left up to others, they argue, by

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producing "testigos, como suelen poner y alegar los coronistas, que aprueban con otros libros de cosas pasadas, . . . porque yo no soy testigo de mí mismo" [witnesses, as the chroniclers are in the habit of doing, who prove the events with other books, . . . because I am not my own witness] (ibid: 591). To this, Bernal dryly replies that his credits are attested to in the letters from Cortés and the emperor himself, which he keeps in his possession; and as to too much praise, he counters that if he hadn't praised the unsung heroes among the common soldiers in the conquest of Mexico, nobody would ever know about them except for the clouds and birds who happened to witness the events.

Perhaps they intended that the clouds or the birds that then passed by high above tell the story? And did Gómara mean to write it when he wrote to His Majesty, or Illescas, or Cortés? What I see from those writings and in their chronicles is that all of them for ever only exalt Cortés while enshrouding our glorious deeds, with which we exalt the same captain to being a marquis and to having all the estate and fame and renown that he has . . . ; but without having a true account, how could they write, but with the taste of their palate, without mistakes, except for the correspondences that they took from the same marquis? And I say this, that when Cortés first wrote to His Majesty, from his pen ever flowed pearls and gold for ink and always in his own praise and never of us brave soldiers. (Ibid: 593)

Thus, the aging conqueror Bernal Díaz articulates the complaint that the conquerors of the New World have not been given the respect and rewards that are due to them. Despite its emphasis on the glories of the conquest, *Historia verdadera* ended on a note that was a far cry from the triumphalism of the early chronicles, such as López de Gómara's *Historia de la conquista*. The world in which Bernal sat down to write was a very different one from the one he describes in the early parts of his history, the glories of the conquest now in the distant past and the neo-feudal class of conquerors and their *encomendero* descendants having become a dying caste in the social order of viceroyal New Spain. By the end of the 1560s, only 5 out of the 560 Spaniards who had participated in the conquest of Mexico survived. And while their heirs still held a total of 480 *encomiendas* in 1560, only 140 remained by the end of the decade (see Chevalier 1963: 118–19; Young 1983). All of the conquerors, Bernal complained, who had suffered the "grandes peligros y trabajos, así de hambre y sed, e infinitas fatigas" of the conquest were now poor and passing their lives in toil and misery. "A esto digo . . . que de todos los que he recontado, ahora somos vivos de los de Cortés cinco, y estamos muy viejos y dolientes de enfermedades, y lo peor de todo muy pobres y cargados de hijos e hijas para casar, y nietos, y con poca renta, y así pasamos nuestras vidas con trabajos y miserias" [And this I say . . . that there remain alive now five of the companions of Cortés, and we are very old, and bowed down with infirmities, and very poor, and with a heavy charge of sons to provide for, and of daughters to marry off, and grandchildren to maintain, and little rent to do it with! And, thus we pass our lives, in pain, in labor, and in sorrow] (Díaz del Castillo 1955: 585).

While some Spanish American creoles inhabiting the social proximity of the viceroyal courts of Mexico or Peru were able to retain certain venues for social advancement

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within the new order, especially in the religious orders and in the universities (see Higgins 2000), by the second half of the seventeenth century the social demise of the neo-feudal class of first conquerors thriving of local estate economies based on Indian labor had been completed. Their creole descendants retained only the faint memory of what they imagined to be a once glorious, though now distant, past.

In 1690 the Mexican savant Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora (1645–1700) published a narrative by the title *Los infortunios que Alonso Ramírez natural de la Ciudad de S. Juan de Puerto Rico padeció assi en poder de Ingleses Piratas* (The Misfortunes that Alonso Ramírez, native to the city of San Juan of Puerto Rico, suffered while in the power of English Pirates). A professor of mathematics and astrology at the University of Mexico, as well as one of the few creoles to hold the position of “Royal Cosmographer” of New Spain, the urban Sigüenza y Góngora benefited to a certain degree from his proximity and good relations with the vice-regal court – even though he was expelled from the Jesuit order under precarious circumstances (see Leonard 1929: 46). Nevertheless, he harbored enough resentment about the pervasive European biases against the American creoles that he sympathized with a poor compatriot from Puerto Rico, Alonso, who showed up at his door one day and with whom the Mexican professor had little else in common. Sigüenza y Góngora later published Alonso’s narrative in part because it allegorized the historical experience of the creoles in Spanish America from the historical vantage point of the late seventeenth century. It tells the life story of Alonso, the son of a poor ship carpenter who had set out from the economically depressed Caribbean island to go west in search of fame and fortune – to discover a “moda para ser rico” (Sigüenza y Góngora 1944: 20). But having arrived on *tierra firme*, he soon found himself not the conqueror of fabulous cities but rather a down-and-out stranger in a land of millions like him. Pressed by economic hardship, he saw no other remedy than to place his fate into the patrimonial hands of his monarch by enlisting as a mariner in service to the Crown. During his first tour en route from Acapulco to Manila, however, he was captured by the fleet of the Protestant English pirate William Dampier and taken against his will on a circum-global journey – across the Pacific and Indian Oceans, up the coast of southern Africa, and across the Atlantic to Brazil. Finally, he was released in the Caribbean on a small vessel and landed under extreme circumstances in Yucatán. From there, he made his way to Mexico City, where his “círculo de trabajos” comes to an end at the house of Sigüenza y Góngora (ibid: 12). Thus, the narrative that begins by retelling the story of a Cortés 150 years before him ends in the creole’s experience of *desengaño* (disillusionment) in the face of poverty, hardship, and, finally, captivity.

As literary historians have often noted, the narrative’s plot hereby represents a rhetorical inversion of the narrative models inherited from the sixteenth-century Renaissance chronicles of the conquest and ushers in the narrative genre of the picaresque (see González 1987; González-Pérez 1983). Whereas the chronicles of the conquest had teemed with magic possibilities for the individual, *Infortunios* portrays the individual as a powerless and passive victim of the forces of material existence. Formalist critics have therefore argued that in its modern sociographic and ethnographic “realism,”

Infortunios represents a sort of missing link in the evolution of the Spanish American novel, thus connecting the Peninsular Spanish picaresque tradition of *El Lazarillo de Tormes*, Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache*, or Quevedo's *El Buscón*, on the one end, with the rise of the novel in Latin America during the nineteenth century, on the other (see Anderson-Imbert 1969: 95; Franco 1994: 31; also Arrom 1963: 80). New historicist critics, by contrast, have turned the critical attention away from questions of generic form and toward questions of ideological content. They have argued that this narrative critiques the histories of the conquest, particularly Bernal Díaz del Castillo's *Historia verdadera*, with which it seems to establish a special dialogical relationship (see Ross 1995).

Yet it is significant to note that *Infortunios* is not a piece of prose fiction in the Peninsular generic traditions of the picaresque or the pastoral novel, but rather the "true history" of the lowly Alonso as transcribed by his Mexican creole compatriot Sigüenza y Góngora – despite its formal similarity and the historical obscurity of its narrator. Neither is it, politically, a history of the counter-conquest in the tradition of the Las Casian critique of the cruelties and injustice of the conquest and of the pretensions and degeneracy of the creoles. From the point of view of the cultural geography of the Spanish empire, *Infortunios* is a continuation, rather than an inversion, of the creoles' neo-feudal critique of Spanish imperialism. It hereby lies very much in the tradition of Bernal Díaz's *Historia verdadera*, the temporal distance between these two texts notwithstanding.

Thus, although no external evidence has been found that would shed light on the historical person of Alonso Ramírez, or even corroborate his existence, Estelle Irizarry has recently published the results of a computer analysis that subjected *Infortunios* to a linguistic comparison with other texts authored by Sigüenza, such as *Alboroto y motín de 1692*, *Mercurio Volante*, and *Relación de lo sucedido a la Armada de Barlovento*. Her analysis produced strong evidence that Alonso was indeed a real person and, as the oral teller of the story, co-author of the book (see Irizarry 1991). The protagonist's geocultural location in the narrative provides the context for his socioeconomic predicament. Thus, the narrator tells us that his father had come – like most of the sixteenth-century conquerors – from Andalucía. Once, Puerto Rico was a thriving island, Alonso reports. But with the native labor force having died off, the gold mines are no longer being worked.

The natives are now hard pressed in their fidelity and honor since the wealthy gold veins which gave the island its name are no longer worked because the original inhabitants who provided the labor have died off. Also, the vehemence of fearful hurricanes whipped the cacao trees that provided for their owners a substitute for gold. As a result the rest of the islanders became poor. (Sigüenza y Góngora 1962: 8–9)

As gold was being replaced by agricultural consumer products for export under the new mercantilist policies of the Habsburgs aimed at a balance of trade, the island was left vulnerable to the forces of an imperial market and dependant on Peninsular Spanish demands. The creoles' economic hardship – what Alonso calls the "fatalidad de mi

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estrella" (ibid: 20) – is the consequence of his island's economic integration within a transatlantic mercantilist system which left colonial production economically undiversified, unsustainable, and permanently underdeveloped. It reflects the beginnings of what Immanuel Wallerstein has called the "geoculture" of modern "world systems" of transoceanic economic peripheries and center that formed the "manifestation of, and the undergirding for, global capitalism" (Wallerstein 1974, 1991).

What was once possible for all (whites), even with "few qualities," is now possible only for Peninsular Spaniards, who are able to "improve their lot" – typically during their tenure in imperial office or by marrying the daughters of wealthy creole *hacendados*. What remains for impoverished creoles such as Alonso is a morality of self-abnegation, subordination, and sacrifice, the resignation to the irreconcilable rift between New World utopia and New World reality in modern vice-regal New Spain. To be sure, Alonso also finds golden cities of riches and splendor as he sets out on his westward enterprise; but they are not *his* cities – not fabulous Aztec cities that were for his taking, but rather impenetrable Spanish citadels from which he, an American creole, was excluded as a stranger in his own land. Upon his arrival at Puebla, for example, he marvels at the riches he beholds but laments that "it is a great pity that the greatness and magnificence of such a superb city should not spread through the world engraved by a glazier's diamond on plates of gold" (Sigüenza y Góngora 1962: 12). The glamorous cities of vice-regal New Spain afford the creole no opportunities for economic progress but only occasion for bitter disillusionment. After evoking the sixteenth-century promises of western conquests, his descriptions of his actual experience in the New World are cast in the baroque language of *desengaño* (disenchantment):

Disabused in the course of my voyage that I would ever escape from my sphere and thinking about those who with few qualities had managed to improve their lot, I dismissed from my mind those ideas which had been perplexing my imagination for several years. (Ibid: 23)

There is still a hint that the reason for the socioeconomic predicament of the creoles may be their pseudo-aristocratic pretension and their unrealistic expectations – in "pasar la vida con más descanso" (ibid: 22). Ultimately, however, the present socioeconomic *desengaño* is attributed to the unequal distribution of wealth and economic opportunities in the Americas between creoles and peninsulars in the new imperial order.

Thus, *Infortunios* does not tell the story of an individual's moral and religious pilgrimage – as was common in much of seventeenth-century picaresque fiction – but emphasizes the material strife between groups of people demarcated by social, religious, racial, and national boundaries. While *Infortunios* formally resembles the Spanish picaresque in some regards – in its episodic structure, an allegorical dimension, and the lowly origins of the protagonist/narrator, for example – the ideological, rhetorical, and epistemological difference between this colonial "true history" and the Peninsular tradition in prose fiction affords us a welcome opportunity to reflect on the causes for the conspicuous absence of prose fiction throughout the colonial Americas in general (see Guillén 1971: 75–85).

As Beatriz González observes in an important essay, the novel was born in Europe when the world "was slowly revealed as a 'reality ordered like prose,' when man was freed from the system of feudal relations and began to recognize the significance of his own individuality. It was born with bourgeois society and with a practice that permitted adopting a popular point of view" (González 1987: 11). But the nascent colonial Spanish American narrative, González continues, participated in a very different manner in these historical processes: "if the [colonial] narrators (chroniclers, historians) participated in the demystification of the Middle Ages and saw the world as a 'reality ordered like prose,' the society which they founded was based in a system of relations that perpetrated the "medieval feudal practices in a world which entered in the epoch of mercantilism." American colonial societies developed social and economic infrastructures that were *different from*, though *co-dependent with*, those of Europe in the spatial dialectic of imperial social and economic development. Due to this difference in socioeconomic structure *vis-à-vis* the imperial metropole, the colonial peripheries participated differently also in imperial ideological transformations and formed distinct genres of prose narrative *at the same time* as the novel was developing in Europe. These distinctly colonial forms of prose narrative, González argues, often form by hybridizing European genres, thereby

transgress[ing] against official censure, and, in a double game of being and not being able to, assume an enmasked condition. The masks envelop the heterodoxy: they adopt forms of chronicles, histories, travel accounts, biographies, hagiographies, verse narratives. They represent an effort of constituting discourses that are distanced from the dangerous anti-literary program of the "novel." Therefore, the Latin American narrative produced other forms – ancillary or peripheral – but not like the novel proper... The autobiographical form present in the colonial narrative should not be understood as an especular reproduction of the European forms. If it was cultivated in simultaneous form to the development of the novel it is because there were a series of analogous historical conditions which permitted the dependent societies to use European cultural models and to adopt them to the demands of colonial reality. (Ibid: 11, 18)

In this context, the continuities between the two stories told by the sixteenth-century conqueror Bernal and his seventeenth-century creole descendant Alonso are important because they call our attention to the discrete cultural geographies across time in the literary evolutions of colonial literary forms on the one hand and metropolitan ones on the other, despite certain formal similarities. First, Alonso's fate is significantly not ascribed to the aristocratic and chivalric values of misguided conquerors – as had the narratives of the counter-conquest such as Cabeza de Vaca's *Relación* – but rather to the ineffectualness of the imperial state in the protection of the conquerors' descendants against foreign invaders, after it had effectively stripped them of their cape and sword. Second, *Infortunios* is neither a literary hoax in the tradition of the *falsos crónicas* such as Fray Antonio de Guevara's *Libro áureo de Marco Aurelio* (1522) and *Reloj de príncipes* (1529) – widely in circulation in Spain and Spanish America during the seventeenth century (see González Pérez 1983: 190) – nor a self-consciously fictional

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travel parody in the Peninsular tradition of picaresque prose fiction – equally popular in the Americas and in Europe at the time (see Leonard 1992: 270–312) – pointing the way to the modern novel. Rather, like Bernal Díaz's *Historia verdadera*, it is a colonial "true history," a first-person *relación* (account) of a historical event told by an observing, though ostensibly marginally literate, eyewitness that has sometimes also been seen as belonging to the non-fictional colonial genre of the "testimonial," especially in its separation of the semiliterate narrator (Alonso) from the literate transcriber (Sigüenza) (see López 1996). Thus, the allegorical discourse of moral edification prevalent in much picaresque fiction, directed "downward" in Counter-Reformation social space, is firmly interlocked in this colonial prose narrative with a historical discourse of political critique directed "upward" in imperial geopolitical space. While the Spanish picaresque novels of the Baroque parodied the sixteenth and seventeenth-century "true histories," emphasizing instead moral or poetic truth, in colonial "true histories" such as *Historia verdadera* or *Infortunios*, though doubtlessly containing elements of fictional or allegorical embellishment, the claim to historicity remains fundamental to the ideological and epistemic critique uttered from a distinctly colonial location within imperial social space. The significant difference between the non-fictional and fictional forms of prose discourse is not in the question of the "factuality" of the events narrated but rather in the contract that the text makes between author and reader: whereas in the emerging metropolitan literary discourses of prose fiction, the reader knows to ask questions about the text's poetical or moral truth, in the true history (or "testimonial") the reader asks questions about the "authenticity" or historical truth of the text, which would render it valuable as source material in historiographic and political rhetoric.

Conclusion

I have suggested that the conceptual vocabulary and methodology of cultural geography may hold significant relevance for the current historiographic debate about colonial American literature, as early Americanists have begun to declare their independence from proto-nationalist metanarratives that would treat colonial American texts merely as the handmaidens for national literary traditions culminating during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By theorizing comparatively both the diversity of literatures in the multiple cultural regions of the Americas and by inquiring what "colonial" meant in each regional context, not as a category of time but rather of space, a cultural-geographic approach may allow us to see not only what is distinct about a literature of any given cultural region in the New World but also what these colonial literatures may have in common across the hemisphere *vis-à-vis* European literary histories in the respective languages. My example here has been New Spain, where the cultural diffusion of Spanish feudalism, strongly inflected by the experience of the reconquest of the Spanish Peninsula from the Moors, was initially supported by the pre-Columbian social and economic infrastructure already

in place in New Spain at the time of the conquest. As the Spanish conquerors replaced or infiltrated the Aztec dynastic elites by murder, contagion, or intermarriage, a uniquely hybrid society developed with all of the racial hierarchies of most creole societies. (In the eighteenth century, "certificates of whiteness" were bought with frequency by creoles who could not assume to fall within that category). During the course of the sixteenth century, New Spain became increasingly reduced to a colony of Castile in economic, social, and cultural terms. Geographic ideologies, such as ideas of the natural "inferiority" of the New World and of creole cultures *vis-à-vis* the Old World, were crucial in this process of imperial consolidation. It is possibly for this reason that the "debate over creole culture" became a theme of "powerful continuity in European responses [to America]" throughout the Atlantic world (Kupperman 1995: 20), as other European nations, such as the French, the British, and the Dutch (though to varying degrees), also aimed to impose a geographical order that would place the center of empire in Europe. Yet the distinctiveness of the cultural processes of diffusion and creolization at work in New Spain is underlined by the miserable failure of the many attempts to replicate the New Spanish model in other regions of the Americas, as is illustrated by the first decade or so of the English colonial experience in Virginia. But in each case, the distinctively "colonial" societies that developed in the various cultural regions of the Americas developed also distinctive literary traditions that cannot adequately be understood within the paradigms of European literary history, but must be seen within the spatial dialectics of early modern transoceanic imperialism. In the early modern Atlantic world, Old World and New World cultures evolved simultaneously and co-dependently within transoceanic imperial systems. Thus, mercantilist economies, absolute monarchies, and nation-states developed in the geographical cores of empire partially as a result of neo-feudalism on the colonial periphery, while colonial creole patriotism (and later nationalism) in the Americas developed partially as a result of mercantilist economies and absolute monarchies in Europe. By the same token, the literary histories of the Old World and the New evolved co-dependently in a cultural interchange between colonial peripheries and metropolitan centers within transoceanic empires.

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