Lorenzo's Devil: Allegory and History in Juan Rodríguez Freile and Fray Pedro Simón

Alberto Villate–Isaza / St. Olaf College

Abstract

In this article I read the allegorical and historical elements contained in the episode of Lorenzo, a colonial subject who deceives an indigenous priest by impersonating the devil, as presented in two seventeenth-century texts, Juan Rodríguez Freile's *El carnero* and Fray Pedro Simón's *Noticias historiales de las conquistas de Tierra Firme en las Indias Occidentales*. I examine how the Lorenzo story, which seeks to promote the providential character of the conquest, ultimately fails to do so, portraying deceitful tactics that destabilize Spanish imperial ideology and call into question the Crown's authority in the territory.

Keywords: Rodríguez Freile, *El carnero,* Pedro Simón, *Noticias historiales,* seventeenth–century colonial historiography

Resumen

En este artículo exploro los elementos alegóricos e históricos del episodio de Lorenzo, un sujeto colonial que engaña a un cura indígena al hacerse pasar por el demonio, tal como se presenta en dos textos del siglo XVII, *El carnero* de Juan Rodríguez Freile y las *Noticias historiales de las conquistas de Tierra Firme en las Indias Occidentales* de fray Pedro Simón. Examino la forma en que esta historia, que busca promover el carácter providencial de la conquista, acaba por desestabilizar la ideología imperial española y cuestionar de la habilidad de la Corona para imponer su autoridad en el territorio.

Palabras clave: Rodríguez Freile, *El carnero,* Pedro Simón, *Noticias historiales,* historiografía colonial del siglo XVII

Juan Rodríguez Freile's *El carnero,* written in 1636, is a historical account of the conquest of modern–day Colombia, well known for its salacious anecdotes and gruesome crimes of passion. In Julie Greer Johnson's words, such unconventional historical events introduce "incongruent elements which hint at the work's ironic interpretation of the history of the region" (*Satiric View* 168).[1] These features of the text have been appropriately related to Freile's identity as a white Creole often in opposition to Spanish colonial institutions.[2] Fray Pedro Simón's *Noticias historiales de las conquistas de Tierra Firme en las Indias Occidentales,* the first volume of which was published in 1627, is a lesser-known historical account of the conquest of the territory now comprised by Colombia and Venezuela. Simón deals less with the corruption of colonial society, and concentrates more on the heroic deeds of the conquistadors and missionary priests who colonized the region. To that effect, a great portion of his multi-volume work is dedicated to Aguirre's rebellion, the final defeat of the Pijao nation, and the different expeditions of Belalcázar, Federmán, and Jiménez de Quesada, the three main conquistadors of the region whose paths crossed in what is today the city of Bogotá. As a Spanish Franciscan friar in charge of establishing the educational system of the order in the region, his account is also highly interested in stressing the importance of the mendicant friars for the evangelization of the territory.[3] These two works are, thus, different in tone, scope, and purpose.

In spite of their differences, both texts have a long critical tradition that emphasizes the literary or fictional character of many of the events narrated.[4] These similarities, however, have not yet been analyzed in relation to the allegorical system that supports the overarching providential framework of both histories. This structure presents the Spanish conquest as a holy war, in which both the conquistador and missionary priest are predestined to expel the devil from the New World. I argue, therefore, that more than a question of verisimilitude, the "fictionality" of certain episodes may be explored as an—ultimately failed—attempt to actualize the providentialist project of Spanish imperial ideology. The ever-changing and heterogeneous reality of the New World, which provided the raw material for the historical examples, contrasts with the rigid ideological intentions of the allegorical representations in these texts. Both *El carnero* and *Noticias historiales*

oscillate between the explicit desire to tell the historical events in their "naked truth" and the ideological purpose of situating the conquest of the region within an imperial narrative of divine foresight. But highly allegorical passages—such as the Fall of Satan, the search for El Dorado, and that of the orphan maiden in *El carnero,* as well as multiple supernatural episodes in *Noticias historiales*—find little correspondence with the historical events used to construct the allegories. In other words, although the allegory is prominent, both Freile and Simón seem unable to anchor its meaning to the historical context, and thus ultimately fail to present the alleged divine mission of the Crown in the New World as a real possibility.

I will pay close attention to a particular episode narrated by both Freile and Simón. The two versions of the same episode exemplify my argument clearly, as their similarities allow me to illustrate the manifest exhaustion of Spanish imperial ideology, while their differences suggest the latent weakness of the Crown's authority. Both Freile and Simón narrate an incident in which a character named Lorenzo captures an indigenous priest whose influence over his community impedes their conversion. Hidden from sight, Lorenzo deceives the indigenous priest by pretending to talk like the devil and thus tricking him into revealing the location of a sanctuary that contained religious offerings, some of gold and precious stones.

While Simón and Freile may draw their inspiration here from a common original source, according to Darío Achury Valenzuela, it is also possible that Freile had access to the unpublished second part of Simón's *Noticias historiales*, which includes this story (46). Whether that may be the case, Freile's episode is not a copy, and while both passages try to situate the use of deceitful tactics within the context of Spain's apostolic mission, there are significant differences that show the distinct effort by the authors to control the episode's historical instruction. For example, in Simón's version Lorenzo is a lay mestizo who aids the Franciscan friar Gaspar Sarmiento in capturing the indigenous priest named Popón. Simón also dedicates significant attention to Popón's conversion to Catholicism (3:154). On the other hand, in Freile's version Lorenzo is a secular clergyman famous in the region for his ability to uncover indigenous treasures (38). Freile mentions neither Lorenzo's race nor the indigenous priest after his capture, concluding the episode instead with the fact that Lorenzo embezzled half of the recovered offerings (40).

An important characteristic of baroque allegory identified by Walter Benjamin is its ability to freeze time. According to Benjamin, when the viewer is confronted by an allegory, a sort of "*facies hippocratica"* unveils history's mummified face (166). At the same time, however, "allegories also become dated, because it is part of their nature to shock" (183). It is as if an allegory, while able to avoid complete decay, is also unable to stop the passage of time entirely, turning living tissue into a petrified ruin.[5]

In the prologues of their histories, the two colonial authors express this contradiction when explaining the fundamental reasons for writing their accounts. For Freile, history constitutes God's gift to humanity in order to preserve knowledge of the past (5). He equates history, therefore, not only with the written record, but also with the possibility of discerning divine meaning from such record. He presents this purpose of history through the allegory of the eternal marriage between Christ and Church. This marriage, Freile continues, is recorded by historians, who, in turn, are ordained by Christ to fulfill their mission as record-keepers and transmitters of the "noticia[s] de lo pasado" (5). Recording the colonization enterprise becomes for him a historical confirmation of the marriage between Church and Christ, in which God's gifts act as a kind of dowry, in the form of precious minerals and treasures from the New World (5). Freile constructs an allegory in which his historical account, while inscribed within the eternal marriage of Christ and Church, is nonetheless closely tied to the patriarchal and aristocratic ethos of his time, and supported by the concurrent extraction of wealth from the New World.

For Simón, similarly, history serves as a kind of archive meant to preserve famous deeds that could be used by future generations as models of virtue or lessons for avoiding vice (1:8). Maintaining a historical record is necessary, Simón clarifies, because human actions are contingent, and just as an action is performed, its trace may soon vanish if it is not captured by history.[6] To represent this, Simón recalls the classical episode of Pegasus' birth from Medusa's severed head, its ascent to mount Helicon, and the creation, from its wounded hoof, of the sacred Hippocrene fountain. Pegasus represents for Simón the fame that results from heroic deeds, which, in turn, becomes a source of inspiration for others to immortalize such deeds in writing (1:7).

But this classically inspired allegory, in spite of its intended universality, fails to explain entirely the reasons for writing *Noticias historiales*. Simón notes that, given the idolatry and bestial rites of the indigenous peoples of the territory, it is also necessary to praise the evangelizing efforts of brave captains, soldiers, and missionaries (1:8). As in Freile's prologue, Simón represents allegorically the purpose of his *Noticias historiales*, while also admitting that this allegory is insufficient to explain the apostolic character of the conquest. Both Freile and Simón seem to recognize that, in spite of the totalizing ideological intentions of the allegory, it represents just a fragment of the historical context of the New World.[7]

A consequence of this fragmentary allegorical representation is that the Spanish imperial ideology, meant to account for the historical actions of both conquistadors and missionary priests alike, becomes clearly insufficient to encompass the reality of the conquest and colonization. The reader is confronted, therefore, with what appears to be two distinct representations—the allegory and its historical actualization or example—rather than with a single overarching narrative. The problem for both Freile and Simón is that, because of the evident gap between these two representations, Spanish imperial ideology shows itself as Benjamin's *facies hippocratica*: rhetorically still alive, yet fossilized and decrepit without any clear form of implementation. Furthermore, this problem shows itself to go beyond issues of identity and subjectivity, as the dying Spanish ideology relates closely to the perceived inability of the Crown to guarantee the continuation of the colonizing enterprise.

Studies have presented seventeenth-century creoles and mestizos as ambiguous, "Janus–faced" subjects with "unstable identity and loyalties" (Merrim 5). They have been recognized mainly as individuals who advocate for stronger participation in colonial institutions, given their self-proclaimed innate knowledge of the homeland, while remaining loyal to the viceregal authority of the Spanish Crown.[8] Anna More has suggested that this representation is insufficient to "relate the racial and patriarchal overtones of creole patriotism to the juridical and political structures of Spanish imperialism" (10). When the allegorical representations of *Noticias historiales* and *El carnero* are analyzed, it is possible to uncover that the failure to relate the ideology of the Spanish Crown to contemporary colonial reality shows important underlying concerns about the "Spanish sovereignty in the Americas," as More also points out (10).

A significant difference between the two accounts is Lorenzo's race. While for Simón, Lorenzo is a lay mestizo (3:152), Freile neglects to make any reference to his race. Freile's manipulation of the event is an example of the control exercised by the author in order to adapt the episode to the specific context of the evangelization of the region. But in addition to this intended control, the omission of Lorenzo's race may represent Freile's ambivalence about his own creole identity. On the one hand, he is more prone to omit Lorenzo's mestizo origin, given his explicit resentment towards Spanish "newcomers," who are only interested in acquiring profit.[9] This resentment is closely tied to complaints of white creoles who sought more participation in civic and ecclesiastical institutions. In this sense, by avoiding Lorenzo's race, Freile is emphasizing Lorenzo's position of relative importance as priest in charge of the conversion and catechesis of approximately twelve thousand Indians, as well as his ability to carry out his task given his knowledge of the native language and the land. On the other hand, by omitting Lorenzo's *mestizaje*, Freile is also distancing him from pervasive perceptions of mestizos as morally suspicious and biologically inferior.[10]

Simón's explicit mention of Lorenzo's race, on the other hand, is helpful in separating the mendicant friars from the secular clergy and mestizo priests. In his version of the episode, the friar Sarmiento discovers the location of Popón's hiding place, but he sends Lorenzo to deceive and apprehend the indigenous priest. By dissociating the deceitful tactic from the Franciscan friar, Simón is placing the moral ambiguity required to capture Popón on the racialized body of Lorenzo. When Lorenzo is pretending to talk like the devil, his voice is emasculated, described as delicate or soft (3:153). Similarly, it is probable for Simón that Lorenzo, as an individual with indigenous blood, is "naturally" prone towards deceit. Simón, for example, explains that the indigenous people have the propensity to return to the sin of idolatry once no one is watching them (3:155).

What makes Lorenzo ideal for capturing Popón thus also highlights his moral weakness. This may explain why Simón is so careful not to validate Lorenzo's actions with a reward from the religious offerings—referred to by Simón as Popón's "treasure" (3:153). These significant differences uncover important racial dynamics, as well as the authors' own identities within colonial society. However, regardless of his race, in both episodes Lorenzo manages to capture the indigenous priest, thus successfully advancing the apostolic mission. Lorenzo's deception carries forward the ideology of the Spanish empire within the allegorical representation of the Christian war against the devil.

The relevant detail I would like to stress is Lorenzo's deceit. His act manages to defeat the devil not through exorcism or catechesis, but through impersonation. In other words, his act is not based on the presence of the holy, which physically forces the devil out of an individual or a place, or rationally moves the subject towards divine truth.[11] In both episodes, Lorenzo hides behind bushes, disappearing from view and presenting himself only as the voice of the devil. His material body literally disappears behind the figure he is impersonating. The use of trickery as a valid tool for evangelization suggests that in order to defeat the devil, one has to appear to act like the devil. This use of deceit, while necessary, seems to question immediately the "divine truth" behind the apostolic mission. The historical actor used as example becomes simply not trustworthy. The instruction to be inferred from such an act is not univocal, as it simultaneously manifests the weakness of the Spanish civic and ecclesiastical institutions, which are unable to deal with idolatry in a straightforward manner. Similarly, the reader never encounters the devil itself, as

he never loses sight of the fact that it is only Lorenzo in disguise. During the act of deception both Lorenzo and the devil lose their historical reality: Lorenzo becomes the impersonated voice of the devil, while the devil is only present for the reader as an impersonated character. The only one fooled, not surprisingly, is the indigenous priest Popón.[12]

The Lorenzo episode seeks to be an example of the power of evangelization and its ability to defeat the devil. Nevertheless, it remains a failed example because its main actor lacks the power to either convert through his presence, or to incarnate evil. Lorenzo is not a messianic-type figure powerful enough to enact conversion through his presence, neither is he the incarnation of evil that scares the reader into a life of Christian virtue. In Benjamin's terms, the "state of emergency" caused by Popón's disruption is only partially resolved by Lorenzo's scheme, as it shows that no lasting redemption ensues, but rather a constant state of uncertainty. In this sense, while race and identity remain important considerations, this episode suggests a generalized perception of Spain's weak sovereignty and the fatigue of the historical possibilities of its imperial ideology.

In both *Noticias historiales* and *El carnero*, the Lorenzo episode is, therefore, at the heart of a larger reflection on the missionary campaigns in the region. The story of Lorenzo's deceit in *El carnero* is the final episode of the highly allegorical fifth chapter, in which Freile briefly describes the falls of both Lucifer and Man. After this sweeping effort at universalism, he then moves on to describe El Dorado—for him the most important indigenous ceremony of the territory—to conclude with Lorenzo's unorthodox methods (34–40). In Simón's account, Lorenzo's story is the central episode of a chapter dedicated to the first campaigns of the Dominican and Franciscan orders in the territory. Additionally, Simón refers to another episode in which the devil had transported this same indigenous priest to the coast of Colombia where he witnessed the ships of the conquistadors approaching the land (3:150).[13] In both instances, the land is so completely dominated by the devil that the use of trickery and deceit becomes necessary and sanctioned by God. Lorenzo's deceit is for Feile and Simón an exemplary moment not only of the war against idolatry in the New World, but also of the overarching Christian war against the devil.

For Freile, the whole of Christian history is necessary to contextualize the Lorenzo episode. After Lucifer is expelled from the heavens, and seeing that God had left Adam and Eve "en su albedrío," the devil tempted them and caused their expulsion from Paradise (34–35). After this, Freile continues, the devil became the prince of the world until Christ redeemed humanity through his sacrifice at the cross. However, "la monarquía del demonio" was not deposed entirely, as there were traces of it in the New World, where the indigenous peoples still idolized the devil in their rites and ceremonies (36). According to the author, the indigenous ceremonies lasted weeks, with all sorts of improprieties and "infinitas ofensas a Dios Nuestro Señor, que callo por la honestidad" (37). Such a long and convoluted detour to the Lorenzo episode is easily understood if we consider Freile's allegorical intentions regarding the providential framework of the conquest. Alvaro Félix Bolaños pertinently notes that the connection between the biblical story and the episode "not only justifies the expropriation of treasures owned by the idolatrous native, but also makes it an absolute necessity" (228).

The historical instruction of this passage can be clearly identified by considering El Dorado as an allegorical representation of the biblical event of the golden calf: the idolatrous indigenous communities, subjected to the devil's monarchy, are worshiping their false idol. Freile is both explaining the reasons why the land is controlled by the devil and describing the extent to which that is the case. The Spanish conquest becomes therefore the means by which God intends to liberate the New World from the tyranny of the devil. Freile is employing the unequivocal symbolic system of the conquest of the New World as a Crusade or *Reconquista*, in which the authority of God seeks to impose itself through the mediation of historical characters chosen explicitly for the task, namely Moses, the Spanish King, the conquistadors, or the missionary priests. Freile presents the eternal and universal character of the ideological project of the Spanish empire by relating recent historical events in the newly "discovered" lands—a territory that had to be inscribed into the known world—to biblical and classical imagery. Freile is returning to the past, not only to make sense of contemporary events, but also to present them as the actualization of a historical constant. He thus freezes history to present the conquest as a reenactment or the fulfillment of a prefiguration, rather than as a new and unique historical occurrence.[14]

However, the allegory also runs the risk of becoming outdated. The past historical events that constitute the basis for the construction of the allegory—the episode of the golden calf, the *Reconquista*—need to be easily correlated to the historical events in the New World. Otherwise, the allegory loses its efficacy, and the effort to stop the passage of time becomes noticeable. As Bolaños shows, presenting the extraction of wealth as a historical necessity is indeed Freile's intention when linking the fall of Lucifer and the expulsion from Paradise to Lorenzo's episode. But, simultaneously, and in spite of Freile's attempt to secure this connection, the allegorical construction of the "devil's monarchy" also uncovers that the supposed imperative for exploitation

is provided only by greed. Rather than representing the conquest's sculpted death mask, it shows the decay underneath.

Right before telling the story of Lorenzo, for example, Freile talks about Antonio de Sepúlveda, who, in his quest for gold, tries to drain the lake where the ceremony of El Dorado was performed. Instead of enjoying the extracted wealth of more than "doce mil pesos," Sepúlveda dies as a poor and tired man (38). This moralizing end to the story serves as a warning for those who let greed, and not the apostolic mission, be the driving force for the conquest of the territory. Consequently, the meaning of the allegory of El Dorado is fragmented, as it may also be interpreted as the representation of the squandering of material wealth. Because Freile mentions in his prologue that the material riches of the territory are God's gift to support the missionary efforts of colonization, Sepulveda's actions are inscribed within the fight against idolatry and the devil's monarchy. While dying in poverty constitutes God's punishment to those who deviate from the proselytizing character of the colonial enterprise, the allegory of El Dorado also represents the successful extraction of wealth: the dowry given by God because of the marriage of Christ and the Church in the New World. It is as if the treasure could be equivalent to both the reward and the punishment.[15]

This fragmentation and uncertainty in the allegory is related to a problem of sovereignty. Moses' absence in the episode of the golden calf can be equated both with the king's physical distance from the New World, and with the inability of his power to extend efficiently across the Atlantic. Additionally, the lack of an effective moral authority uncovers the perverted values that underscore the sacred union between the New World and Christ. Framed within the squandering of God's gifts presented in the prologue, El Dorado emphasizes the constant presence of immense riches in the New World as much as it does the absence of "true" value behind material wealth. In that sense, the dazzle of El Dorado hides the lack of Christian moral values behind the gilded icon, yet, at the same time, attracts the individual with its mere promise of material wealth. The allegory of El Dorado relates the incompetence of the Spanish Crown, which is incapable of administering correctly the material wealth given by God, to the impotence of the apostolic mission of colonization, which is unable to present itself as the primary motivation behind the colonizing enterprise.

The Lorenzo episode is yet another attempt at bridging the gap between the historical reality of the New World and allegorical representation. After describing in detail the ceremony of El Dorado and Sepúlveda's plans to drain the lake, Freile abruptly remarks: "No puedo pasar de aquí sin contar cómo un clérigo engañó al diablo, o a su jeque o mohán, en su nombre, y le cogió tres o cuatro mil pesos que le tenían ofrecidos en un santuario que estaba en la labranza del cacique viejo de Ubaque" (38). To liken historical reality and allegorical representation seems to require alternative or unorthodox methods for carrying forward the Spanish imperial ideology. But while Lorenzo's alternative method is effective to a degree, the embezzlement re-inscribes the episode within the squandering of God's gifts and the inability of the Crown to guarantee their rightful exploitation. This attempt to connect the allegorical representation of Spanish imperial ideology to the historical reality of the territory ultimately fails to reassert the importance of the Spanish Crown in the New World. The convoluted tactics of deception run the risk of perpetuating themselves and presenting evangelization as an individual for-profit endeavor.

In Simón's *Noticias historiales*, similarly, the allegorical battle between Christ and the devil contrasts with the failed proselytizing attempts of the friars in the region. The difficult task of introducing "la Ley Evangélica en unos pechos tan de bronce y connaturalizados en idolatrías" (3:150) was made even harder by the strong influence that the indigenous priest Popón had over the community.[16] For Simón, it was evident that the efforts and traditional methods of the friars were insufficient to instill Christianity in the native community, especially given the close ties between Popón and the devil. Lorenzo's deceitful tactic of talking like the devil to apprehend Popón arises then within the space that separates the expected outcome of the Spanish providentialist project—a self–evident truth that leads to swift conversion—and the unexpected reality of the New World, in which indigenous peoples "stubbornly" resisted such conversion. And as in Freile's episode, the priest also takes to Spain a good portion of Popón's treasure, denoting the ambiguity of material wealth, which may be interpreted as both God's gift to the priest and proof of his corruption.

Different from Freile, however, Simón is more intentional in limiting the historical instruction of the episode to the conversion of the indigenous population. For that reason, while *El carnero* does not mention what happened with the indigenous priest after the confiscation of his treasure, in *Noticias historiales* Simón goes on to describe Popón's capture and his later conversion. While this constitutes an attempt at presenting the positive consequences of Lorenzo's deceitful tactics, Popón's conversion is also explained incompletely through the allegorical representation of Spain's apostolic mission. Instead of answering questions, it ends up uncovering, once more, anxieties about Spanish sovereignty in the New World.

In Simón's version, when Popón is captured, he speaks directly to Lorenzo in his own native language:

"[T]ú habías de ser el que me habías de prender, y el que me hablaste con engaño en nombre de mi Dios la noche pasada. Ya el tuyo quiere que dejando el mío, lo siga, y la ley que vosotros enseñáis, porque me ha hablado en el corazón" (3:154). Simón reinforces the idea that Lorenzo's deceit is a necessary condition for Popón's conversion, as God had already predisposed him to follow the Catholic faith. In order for this deceitful scheme to be successful, Simón implies, it needs God's direct participation. However, instead of an allegory that reinforces God's presence—a burning bush, a radiant light, and so forth—the reader is left with an indirect view, a partial account, which, rather than emphasizing the redemptive qualities of God's direct participation, stresses His absence from the episode. Within the allegorical representation of the Christian war against the devil, Popón's conversion seems disjointed, causeless, and does little to diminish the uncertainty produced by lingering questions: why is deceit necessary in the first place if God had spoken to Popón? Or, is Popón lying about God speaking to him? As he was once able to predict the arrival of the Spanish with help from the devil, is his own conversion also a prediction made possible by the devil?

Simón attempts once again to control historical instruction by proving Popón's true change of heart. Soon after his capture, Popón is catechized and baptized. According to Simón, he became such a devout Catholic that he went on to preach the faith, "imitando con esto al Apóstol San Pablo" (3:154). As in Freile's case of El Dorado and the golden calf, Simón resorts to the allegorical representation of the biblical episode of Paul's conversion. The mention of Paul intends to calm lingering doubts about his previous assertion of Popón talking to God. However, this allegorical reference brings its own set of questions since, unlike the biblical episode in which the divine will is enough to enact profound change, in Simón's version God seemingly needs the intervention of Lorenzo as intermediary.

Here too, it is possible to uncover anxieties related to Spanish sovereignty, not only as God's voice seems to have lost some of its authority, but also as there is a need for such a convoluted plan to enact conversion. Simón's use of the word "imitando" is telling within this context, because it allows Popón's conversion to be regarded semantically as an act of perverted mimicry instigated by the devil.[17] As in Freile's case, therefore, Lorenzo's unorthodox tactic for carrying forward Spanish imperial ideology is successful only to a point. Evangelization may continue, but in addition to the fact of the Catholic priest holding on to part of the treasure, there are multiple unresolved questions that destabilize the purpose of Spanish intervention in the New World in the name of Catholicism. Rather than clearly illustrating a vigorous Spanish imperial ideology in action, the episode makes continuous reference to a sterile and wilted representation of "la monarquía del demonio" in the New World.

Simón's evident intentionality to control the episode's historical instruction is different from Freile's, however. While in Freile's episode material wealth acts as a sort of dead end that interrupts the allegory and destabilizes historical instruction, Simón's telling of the episode offers a concerted effort to present a relevant lesson. Simón tries to explain the need for the unorthodox methods of evangelization by referring to yet another allegory—Paul's conversion—which, however, still fails to answer lingering questions about the historical possibilities of the missionary efforts. For both Simón and Freile, the allegorical battle between Christ and the devil waged in the New World is problematized by these deceitful methods that implicitly undermine the ideology of the Spanish Empire. The constant ambiguity of historical instruction destabilizes Spain's narrative of divine intervention, promoting the questioning of the Crown's ability to impose itself on the territory. Simultaneously, as the episodes unravel the fundamental weakness of the Crown, the historian struggles to gain absolute control of his historical narrative. Narrating history becomes an *ars inveniendi*, in the sense alluded to by Benjamin: a manipulation of rhetorical figures and rules which demonstrates the "man of genius" behind the construction (178–79). Simón and Freile's attempt to present their power as historiographers is in direct contrast with the underlying absence of an authority capable of carrying forward Spanish imperial ideology.

Notes

1. In her book *Satire in Colonial Spanish America,* Johnson explores Freile's ironic appropriation of the biblical and literary tradition, allowing the reader to construct his own subversive interpretation of colonial reality (56–61). Additionally, Susan Herman notes that *El carnero*'s irony is not limited to the colonial order, but is extended to the Judeo–Christian myth itself (285). A recognition of Freile's ability to ironically portray colonial society may be traced as far back as the nineteenth century, when José María Vergara y Vergara, in his *Historia de la literatura de la Nueva Granada* of 1868*,* described Freile's style as "socarrón" (84).

2. Johnson's and Herman's studies, for example, imply that white Creoles, such as Freile, were not only the audience best equipped to interpret the satires, but also the most adept at producing them. As satire and irony rely on the combination of different literary and cultural traditions, "colonial satirists gradually established satire as a means of self–definition and a form of political resistance, and thus confirmed its use as an affective vehicle for subversion for a marginalized group" (Johnson *Satire* 17). Most explicitly, Germán Posada Mejía states that Freile inaugurates a different attitude towards America in relation to previous chroniclers: "[Freile] inicia este nuevo ciclo, en que hay un viraje del sentimiento histórico: [. . .] un sentirse ya producto criollo, modelación del barro indiano" (75).

3. Simón's *Noticias historiales* is a vast work divided into three parts, each, in turn, subdivided into seven "noticias." The first part, the only one published in Simón's time, deals with the conquest of Venezuela, while the other two deal with the conquest of Colombia. Bernard Lavallé explores the animosity between the religious orders and the secular clergy, which was not only about the prerogatives of evangelization, but also masked a racial conflict between Spanish and Creole priests. In particular Lavallé refers to the *Audiencia de Santa Fe*, where Creole and mestizo clerics were in notable disadvantage in contrast with their peninsular counterparts (68–70).

4. Álvaro Félix Bolaños notes that while there is a small number of critics that characterized *Noticias historiales* as a text that fluctuates between historical truth and literary fiction, their influence was strong (21). For Bolaños, however, the "fictional" character of the episodes responds to the use of seventeenth-century historiographical and oral sources, as well as to the ideological opposition between Europe (civilization) and the New World (barbarism, 22). *El carnero* also has a strong critical tradition that has emphasized the text's highly literary passages. Eduardo Camacho Guizado defined *El carnero* as "un caso de invasión de elementos novelísticos en una plataforma historiográfica" (43). Similarly, Oscar Gerardo Ramos coined the term "historielas" to define the text's "tendencia de índole cuentística" (2179). Silvia Benso y Juan Manuel Cuartas have also made use of the term "historielas" to define the narrative stories that combine historical fact with legend and the creative imagination of the writer.

5. "In the ruin," Benjamin declares, "history has physically merged into a setting. And in this guise history does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay" (178). It is this "guise" of history as a process of decay which finds no correspondence with the promise of redemption and eternal life implicit in the providential character of Spanish colonization.

6. José Antonio Maravall notes the novelty of Simón's emphasis on contingency (14). He affirms that Simón is separating History from Nature, and thus effectively doing away with natural laws that determine human behavior: "los hechos humanos son únicos en su individualidad, no están ligados por una relación de determinación, de tal manera que unos no engendran a los otros, y su realidad, en definitiva, es la de la memoria, la de la Historia" (15).

7. For Anna More, "Benjamin's theory of Baroque allegory allows us to relate Spanish American hybridity, as expressed in seventeenth–century Creole texts, to the evangelical projects that were the centerpiece of Spanish sovereignty in the Americas" (14). While my argument follows this basic premise, it focuses, however, on the fragmentation that destabilizes Spanish ideology and questions its efficacy, rather than on Creoles' desire to find "meaning in local objects that had become separated from their original traditions" (15).

8. Regarding this "Creole ambiguity," see Antony Pagden, David Brading, Ralph Bauer, and José A. Mazzotti, as well as Lavallé and More.

9. Germán Colmenares notes that in the first decades of he seventeenth century, the traditional *encomendero* elite was losing its social and economic power due to a decrease in mining profits and new waves of immigration from Spain (254–58). While in economic difficulties, Freile nonetheless identified himself as the descendent of one of the original founders and first *encomenderos* of Bogotá. He bitterly complains, for example, that the Spanish newcomers lack the necessary purity of blood: "en este tiempo, había una cédula en la Casa de la Contratación de Sevilla, por la cual, privaba su majestad el Emperador Carlos V, nuestro rey y señor, que a estas partes de Indias no pasasen sino personas españolas, cristianos viejos, y que viniesen con sus mujeres. Duró esta cédula mucho tiempo. Agora pasan todos: debióse de perder" (83). Stephanie Merrim identifies Freile's "creole politics" as one of the agendas that "fan the flames of *El carnero's* extreme Baroque righteousness" (265).

10. Regarding the racial conceptions of Creole and mestizos, see Jorge Cañizares–Esguerra, Lavallé, Bauer, and Mazzotti.

11. Regarding the importance of the holy as a presence whose power carries out the devil, see Fernando Cervantes and Nancy Caciola.

12. Enrique Pupo-Walker identified the characteristics of Lorenzo's episode as belonging to Spanish popular tradition (350). In this sense, the episode can be connected to the medieval stories noted by Fernando Cervantes as "set in a context of unshakable confidence" (19), regarding God's capacity to defeat the devil. However, this confidence is undermined by the perceived absence of authority.

13. According to Carl Henrik Langebaek, it was common for Muisca religious leaders to claim previous knowledge of the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors, as part of their strategy to legitimate their power, as well as a way of seeking integration within the new social order being imposed upon them (*Resistencia* 40).

14. "Over and over again the message of the reformers of the first three decades of the seventeenth century was a message of return. Return to the primeval purity of manners and morals; return to just and uncorrupt government; return to the simple virtues of rural and martial society. The future essentially lay in the past" (Elliott 51–52).

15. For Bolaños, the Lorenzo episode is a "happy actualization, made after the fact, of the desired finding of treasures that for so long frustrated so many Spanish and Euro-American Conquistadors" (229). My reading is thus complementary to Bolaños's, as I take this "happy actualization" to be not a conscious denunciation by Freile, but rather a by-product of his own attempt to present the extraction of wealth as fundamental for the providentialist project of the Spanish empire.

16. Langebaek notes that by the second half of the sixteenth century, less prestigious *chuques*, or indigenous priests, strengthened their political power and influence on the Muisca community, as the authority of traditional leaders such as caciques and elite religious figures deteriorated. Under this view, Lorenzo's action constitutes not only an act against idolatry, but also a political act against an influential indigenous leader (*Resistencia* 31–33; *Buscando* 92–94).

17. "Mimicry is a thing of the devil, or *simian Dei*, as the fallen angel was called, alluding to his supposed apelike fondness for imitation" (Jáuregui 73).

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