

# THE "INDIAN TUMULT" OF 1692 IN THE FOLDS OF BAROQUE CELEBRATIONS. HISTORIOGRAPHY, POPULAR SUBVERSION, AND CREOLE AGENCY IN COLONIAL MEXICO

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The Spanish American xviii-century, often identified as the period of "viceregal stabilization," is generally associated with two principal facts. First of all, with the overcoming of territorial strife which had devastated the colonial world since the "discovery;" secondly, with the flourishing of a culture that, for the first time in the history of the new continent, seemed not only to emulate but to surpass its European counterpart in its refinement and splendor. The monumentality that metropolitan models assumed in American territories, and the notion that the *pax Hispanica* had finally triumphed over the primitivism of the New World, overshadowed, in the critical evaluations of the era, the importance of the internal dynamics, particularly of interracial character, that ran deep within colonial societies. Nonetheless, even when the Baroque culture was at its peak, the social practices and symbolic production of the vast populations that escaped the processes of cultural conversion continued to develop on a popular level, in the outskirts and even at the heart of the *lettered city*. These practices gave evidence of a subversive potential which, coming from the margins of constituted powers, was capable of posing a substantial threat to the imperial project.<sup>1</sup>

Once these heterodox and anti-hegemonic dynamics emerge with enough strength as to impact the historical consciousness, they demand from us, on the one hand, a relativistic analysis of the models implanted from the conquest henceforth. On the other hand, they force us to scrutinize, from our current perspective, the discursive, interpretative, and representational strategies from which Creole culture registered or displaced the events that challenged the supremacy of Peninsular and American elites throughout various stages of their colonial domination. It is well known that colonial reports, as well as, liberal historiography, later on, provided a tinted account of subaltern mobilizations. They also created an ideological and stereotypical image of both conquerors and conquered peoples, through the elaboration of a triumphalist discourse that assigned fixed

<sup>1</sup> The allusion to "Baroque Culture" and "the lettered city" obviously correspond to the works of José Antonio Maravall y Ángel Rama, respectively.

values to historical events, social actors, or cultural developments that might have introduced heterogeneity, transgression, or multiplicity on the already settled horizons of colonial societies.

Multiplicity and representation constitute, then, two key elements within colonial culture, and particularly in the period at hand, when metropolitan models had already established their hegemony overseas, and had become the principal axis of the Creole imaginary.

But the multiple is not, as Giles Deleuze indicates, that which has many parts, but rather that which folds in many ways (3), that which, as in Baroque architecture, intricately ties interior with exterior, high and low, presence and absence. It is the folding, refolding, and unfolding (*el pliegue, el repliegue y el despliegue*) of material and symbolic forms, whose labyrinthine relationship results in the production of specific and often contradictory modalities of rationality and sensibility.

From our current perspective the era of the Colonial Baroque presents the challenge of penetrating the folds of the multiple forms of subjectivity —be they dominant or alternative— that manifest themselves in connection —or in confrontation— with the *first* modernity that impacted American societies in the xviii-century, forms of subjectivity that challenged, each in its own way, the universalizing and Eurocentric processes of transculturation that were implemented since the discovery as one of the most fundamental strategies of colonial domination.

Only a reading *against the grain* of the aesthetic and historiographical production of this period could allow for a new approach to the social dynamics of Creole society, a reality that we often apprehend through a distorted perspective, affected by what Carlos Sigüenza y Góngora called “the green glass” of subjectivism. History, then, reveals itself only in a partial and over-determined manner, particularly given the specific and contradictory articulation of Creole *letrados* within Baroque society, in which this sector struggled to affirm its own forms of preponderance and its social identity.

The observations of the Mexican *letrado* Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora about “the green glass” of subjectivism we have just referred to, are included in the introduction of his well known piece “*Indian Tumult and Uprising in Mexico*,” [*Alboroto y motín de los indios de México*], an account addressed to Admiral Andrés de Pez, which narrates, from the viceregal perspective, the Indian and *Mestizo* uprising of 1692. The subversion was precipitated by the rain, floods, and plagues that destroyed in that year the crops of corn and wheat in the Anahuac Valley region.<sup>2</sup> The insurrection included around ten thousand people, who were

<sup>2</sup> Sigüenza's text was published in English, in *Don Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora. A Mexican Savant of the Seventeenth Century* (1929), by Irving Leonard, with the title “Letter to Admiral Pez.” The text was published in Spanish in 1932.

confronted with the repression imposed on that occasion by viceregal authorities. The uprising, which culminated in the burning of the viceregal palace, La Alhóndiga, endangered not only the material foundations and personal security of the Creole elite situated at the heart of the viceroyalty of New Spain. It also staggered the symbolic stability of a social and political order settled upon the material superiority and the rituals of power. The revolt resulted in a series of exemplary acts of persecution and punishment which included incarceration, torture, public executions, and banishment. In its social dimension and discursive repercussions, the uprising of 1692 constituted a paradigmatic instance that revealed, in multiple, unseen, and contradictory ways, the many facets hidden in the height of Baroque culture in its time of maximum splendor.

If the topic focused by Sigüenza's text undoubtedly exposes one of the most frequent modes of expression of popular counterculture within the parameters of its time, its discursive organization also reveals the ideological make up and the *weltanschauung* of the dominant sector, which came together when confronted with the threat constituted by the popular uprisings. In fact, from the lexical selection to the use of temporal-spatial units, through the characterization of real individuals to the rhythm itself of the narrative and the symbolic recourses employed in this account, the epistolary narrative of Sigüenza y Góngora, reveals the application of a poetics of historiography which is not only a tribute to the Spanish rhetorical tradition. It also incorporates notions of social control and American civility that were elaborated in the context of colonial society, and implemented by the administrative, political, and religious apparatus which had established its power in the New World.<sup>3</sup>

In its anti-heroic and disorganized dynamics, the events narrated by Sigüenza y Góngora crown the series of insurrections that characterized the history of the viceroyalty of New Spain from the beginning of the conquest. However, the uprising of 1692 is more concretely associated with the revolt that almost seventy years earlier, in 1624 had devastated, in a similar way, the guarded order of the Baroque city. But if the 1692 revolt couldn't but stir the historical memory of the city, its literary account also appropriated elements that, in form and spirit, referred to the genre of chronicles and *relaciones* that had been used for two centuries to report events related to the conquest and colonization of new territories to the Spanish authorities. Nevertheless, in this instance the chronicler is not a Peninsular soldier or *adelantado*, but rather an erudite *criollo* with close ties to the local government. From this particular social and epistemological location,

<sup>3</sup> The text "Indian Tumult and Uprising in Mexico" has been studied, among others, by Kathleen Ross and Sam Cogdell. Both critics have emphasized the importance of this chronicle as *Criollo* discourse, and studied the historiographical models followed in Sigüenza y Góngora's composition.

Sigüenza's epistolary discourse exposes, from the perspective of the institutional order, both the dramatic nature of social antagonisms in the region, and the conflictive nature of the Creole mediation, as they manifested themselves towards the end of the xviii century.

Sigüenza y Góngora's letter, first compiled and published by Irving Leonard in 1932, comprised for a long time the most official account of the uprisings occurred three hundred years earlier. Nonetheless, today it is *only one* of the many existing sources we have for the reconstruction of these events. It is also, without a doubt, the version that is most tinted by the "*vidrio verde*" of Creole consciousness. In fact, the text clearly depicts the position of the Creole elite, which is caught at the center of the turmoil created by this new attack on the viceregal order. Situated in this defining moment, the privileged group —here represented by the narrative voice—, opts for the defense of a system that victimizes the very subjects that, in other texts, the erudite Sigüenza represents as the descendents of a captivating culture, that he places, almost with veneration, at the center of his archaeological reconstruction of Mexican pre-history.<sup>4</sup>

In spite of the undeniable importance of this historiographic version, few studies have analyzed Sigüenza's text from a literary perspective, and even fewer have studied its historic value, its claims of verisimilitude, its construction of a paradigm of indisputable truth, its political functionality within the broad framework of colonial political tensions, or in connection with the complex process of emergence and consolidation of Creole consciousness. Only ten years ago, in a 1994 study by historian Douglas Cope, have we had a careful reading of the uprisings based on the existing documentation available at the Archivo de Indias, in Seville. This study provides a reconstruction of the accounts provided by witnesses and instigators of the insurrection. These witnesses testified before the Real Audiencia and other tribunals that investigated the events immediately after the revolt, and who made the decisions about the brutal punishments imposed upon those who were considered responsible for the uprising.<sup>5</sup>

I propose here then, that we consider Sigüenza's text only as a one of the possible sources for the analysis of the insurrection of 1692. In other words, his account should be taken just as one of the folds in which the historiographic conscience of the American Baroque reveals and at the same time conceals certain layers of collective memory and quotidian experience in the process of constructing the Creole imaginary. In this sense the event could be studied as a pre-

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<sup>4</sup> For studies on Sigüenza y Góngora and the history of the Amerindian past, see Pagden, Leonard, and Ross.

<sup>5</sup> This work is indebted to Cope's study and his careful reading of the accounts revealed in the documents filed at the *Archivo de Indias*. His findings have recovered a multiplicity of voices and perspectives which make it necessary to reinterpret Sigüenza y Góngora's text at a new light.

cise instance of localization and displacement of Creole subjectivity with respect to the symbolic nuclei of social and political legitimacy in viceregal society. But, at the same time, the insurrection reveals other aspects of the fragmentary, hidden, and discontinued history of the popular sectors that were materially and discursively subjugated by learned power. In fact, reading against the grain of official interpretations of this text, the popular sectors that rebel against the practice of "colonization of imaginaries" that is part of the project of colonial domination, appear in the temporal enclave of the insurrection as social subjects that defy creole order through their actions, but also through their testimonials, offering pieces of information that were severely controlled and rigidly mediated by the dominant structures. Through this well regulated discursive production, the dominated defies both Creole canonicity and its correlative hermeneutics, creating its particular form of symbolic reversion of universalist and centralizing rationality.

#### BAROQUE OPPOSITES AND THE LOGIC OF SUBVERSION: SYSTEMS IN CONFLICT

The narrative elaboration of Sigüenza's text is based on two principles which are central to the Baroque: first, the oxymoronic disposition that opposes, both at an aesthetic and at an ideological level, the qualities assigned to the narrative matter, thus offering a somehow reductive and polarized account of the historic event. Secondly, the strategy that proposes the interpretation of the revolt as a sudden and unforeseeable rupture of a social and political order, organized around the authoritative principles of monarchy and Christianity. In this manner, the uprising is represented in the text as a social catastrophe, as the unfortunate advent of exceptional circumstances that impact, in an unjustified and overwhelming manner, the harmonic reality of viceregal society.<sup>6</sup> The first recourse creates an antithesis of elements which is easily identifiable within the framework of Baroque decorativism, as well in the context of religious doctrine and class hierarchies. The second principle reinforces the idea of an essential order that only temporarily succumbs to uncontrollable, exterior forces, which are shown as being more a product of nature than of the internal contradictions created by colonialism. In both cases the discursive strategies utilized by Sigüenza support the construction of a hyperbolized, polarized, and metaphorical account, where the destructive forces of the floods and the plagues that devastated the region resemble the turbulent dynamics mobilizing the masses.

<sup>6</sup> In his study, Cope refers to the notion of catastrophe. Kurnitzky also mentions the "experiencing of catastrophe" as a means of social organization (10).

Due to the very nature of the event narrated in the chronicle, but also as a result of Sigüenza's narrative perspective, the *crescendo* also appears as a central stylistic recourse, which becomes evident from the beginning when we observe the lexical construction of the text. The account starts by qualifying the uprising as a form of "disturbance" ([*'alboroto'*] a word that carries the connotations of *confusion, disorder, or disruption*) and escalates to the qualification of the event as a "riot" ("*motín*") which suggests the idea of a subversive, transgressive, and strategically planned mobilization, animated by a clear sense of purpose and a well defined teleology. Likewise, in referring to the participants as "Indians" or as "the populace," the globalizing strategy encompasses in one derogatory and collective concept, castes, Mulatto groups, slaves, and even Spanish descendants who were involved in one way or another in the mobilization.

In this manner the text utilizes a binary system that reveals, throughout the dominant *weltanschauung*, the antagonisms of race, class, and gender, that characterized the society of New Spain towards the end of the xvii<sup>th</sup>-century. The general framework revolves around the oppositional terms: elite/Indian populations, order/chaos, commercial exchange/spontaneous appropriation, laws/crime, nature/civilization, thus providing strict parameters for the representation of the insurrection. Additional oppositions such as fiesta/riot, joy/sadness, body/spirit also contribute to support the anecdotal development of the text. As penned by Sigüenza, the text seems to take on the tone of a carnivalesque *performance* of Baroque celebrations, or the allegorical dramatization represented in the *autos de fe* or the profane theatre, which constituted an important part of the festive imaginary of Creole society.

Nonetheless the conflict is not presented to the reader through the mere registry of these polarities, but rather through the process of inversion and intermingling of elements that produced a disturbing contamination between different spaces, in other words, by the dynamics of transgression of material and symbolic boundaries carried out by the mutineers. The flooded roads that mimicked the overwhelming force of an uncontrollable social reality, the lack of cargo animals capable of transporting provisions from nearby towns to the depleted city, the *chihuiztli* worm that ravaged the crops, and the fires that destroyed the city, all seem to symbolize, in Sigüenza y Góngora's synthesis, a sudden and extensive degeneration, not only in material resources but also in the ideological components of Mexican society. These elements represented a sort of grotesque and invasive allegorization, the cancellation of ordinary channels of social communication and political negotiation on which the *status quo* was based prior to the uprisings.

In order to mark the contrast with the narration of the events that were to follow, the letter to Almirante Pez begins by recounting the accomplishments and the concrete strategies used by Virrey Conde de Galve in order to avoid a further deterioration of the situation. Within a second framework, Sigüenza's report de-

tails the elaborate festivities celebrating, during the days of the uprising, the matrimony of Carlos II and Mariana de Neoburgo, with a display of decorated carriages, costumes, and allegorical parades. The celebration unfolded in front of the Alhondiga amidst the flags, banners, and cries of the populace calling for the blood of the Virrey and the "gachupines" who participated in the local government. The anticlimax created by the festive background suggests the exceptionality of the revolt, the advent of a barbaric mobilization, and the need for an immediate return to the previous state.

The social and psychological determinism suggested in Sigüenza's account seeks to divert the attention from the economic, political, and administrative reasons for the insurrection. They propose, rather, to focus on racial issues that supposedly reinforced the civilizing mission of the colonial order. The antisocial nature of Indians and castes, and the ingratitude and resentment that Sigüenza considered characteristic of the masses, added to their supposed lack of restraint, which would have been exacerbated by the consumption of large quantities of *pulque*.

The transgression of frontiers, the violation of social order, the attacks on personal security and private property, the invasion of material and symbolic spaces that comprised the controlled confines of the viceregal elites, are presented as an unnatural inversion of the state of law and civility. These actions are also presented as proof of the ways by which American *otherness* undermined the very foundations of a system based on economic centralization and political authoritarianism. Finally, rural and urban spaces overlap in a subversion of social functions that had the effect of transforming individuals into subjects, subalterns into social actors. The infamous characters that become alive in Sigüenza's narrative expressed themselves through actions which, from the perspective of the authorities, would convert them, in turn, into victimizers and aggressors. Nevertheless, it is obvious that, if only momentarily, marginalized sectors managed to take control of the public space, suddenly turning a political arena into a battleground. This is, in fact, the "up side down world" that the Baroque satire represented in a burlesque registry, and that the chronicles showed in a dramatic light which did not exclude irony and scorn for the inferior classes that, if only provisionally, attained an active role in destabilizing the colonial order.

#### TEXTUAL BATTLES

There are, however, other stories, that emerged from the fragmentary and disperse accounts given by the participants of the uprising itself, and that were recuperated by Douglas Cope in his original study. These accounts articulate themselves in a variety of ways, to other textual sources which are part of the multiplicity of discourses that were produced around this insurrection, and that

created a genuine textual battle that threatened the centrality and verisimilitude of official accounts.

There is, on the one hand, documentation of the Junta of April 29, 1692, which details a meeting between members of the Real Audience, magistrates from different administrative institutions, high ranking members of the church, and the *Cabildo*. Cope qualifies this as one of the most impressive assemblages of its kind in the history of colonial Mexico. In the course of the meeting the participants discussed in detail matters such as the state of market, the popular demand, and measures that appeared to be needed in order to control speculation, the hoarding of crops by producers and distributors, as well as alternative means for the fixing of prices and the organization of consumption.

In addition to the edicts and decrees issued the year before by Virrey Conde de Galve in order to control the lack of supplies and enforce the provision of corn, wheat, and other crops to the populations of surrounding areas, the testimonies we have of the Junta de Abril constitute the documentary corpus that serves to counterbalance the interpretation of the mobilization of Indians and Mestizos. Their actions were depicted, as we have seen, as part of the "spasmodic" dynamics through which the "spontaneous, unmotivated, and unforeseen" history of dominated sectors is usually expressed.<sup>7</sup> But the documents related to the Junta de Abril allow us to understand the insurrection not as a violent and transient event, but as a result of the gradual process of closure of the channels of provision, communication, and political negotiation, in the months preceding the uprising.

Along with these documents, Cope has recovered two anonymous letters sent directly to the King by individuals who signed as "his most loyal vassals," denouncing the abuses of the administration of New Spain, and holding viceregal authorities directly responsible for the crisis. Distancing itself from the usual eulogies of the Virrey that normally comprised this sort of correspondence, the letters focus on reporting accusations that included charges of administrative corruption, tyranny, bribery, profiteering, speculation, exploitation of manual labor, imposition of illegal tariffs upon cattle, as well as threats of banishment to Texas to anyone who would oppose the official order. In addition, the letters emphasized the accumulation of wealth on the part of Viceroy Conde de Galve, in a proportion which surpassed, according to these letters, what four others Virreyes would have amassed in a similar period.<sup>8</sup>

As a backdrop of these events, which unfold on the foreground of the discursive scenario where the uprising is being represented, many voices, with diverse

<sup>7</sup> Cope refers to the "spasmodic vision of popular history" (5) in alluding to the forms of historical interpretation, currently under revision, that do not lend sufficient importance to the social and economic factors which prepare and explain massive insurrections in various contexts.

<sup>8</sup> As Cope indicates, it may have been Peninsular aristocrats who disliked the Creole elite. See Cope 133, 134.



functions, manifest themselves in various ways within the limits of the *lettered city*. They serve as an expression of the collective character of the populace: anti-Spanish lampoons which precede and accompany the uprising, admonitions that the priests address to the subversive groups, sermons condemning from the pulpit the Viceroy, which in the opinion of Sigüenza y Góngora, imprudently confirmed the suspicions of the masses. In addition, the text presents the demands, gossip, and rumors of women whose voices rise in the crowd. Finally, the text alludes to the formal appeals presented before the archbishop and the viceroy, which upon being disregarded, become clear evidence of the cessation of the dialogue with the responsible authorities of the regional government, showing the necessity to find new strategies of collective action.

Together with the multiplicity of voices, the official testimonials, and also those provided by the participants of the revolt make special emphasis on the sounds of deafening cries, the whistling, the tolling of bells and gunshots, a tumult that Sigüenza compares with the sound of a hundred drums beating at once. The noise marks the *crescendo* of the uprising, and contributes to the depiction of the event as a threatening and carnivalesque performance that terrorizes the elite and instigates the popular struggle. The cries call for the death of the *gachupines* and the blood of the "cuckold" ("*cornudo*") Viceroy Conde de Galve, the Virreina who had turned him into that, and the principal magistrate of New Spain (the *corregidor*).

From the perspective of the elite, this overwhelming and cacophonous scenario is assimilated to the orality of the masses and to the fragmentary and contradictory nature of the testimonies offered by the direct participants of the uprising. This auditive depiction stands in notorious opposition to the organized historiography offered by Sigüenza's account, where the tumultuous events are documented in a linear narrative that absorbs the chaos of the revolt into the order of the discourse. This contrast is made clear by the multiplicity of versions that Cope has compiled, which make a strong claim of verisimilitude, in response to the pressures of the authorities who attempted to subsume the events into a manageable rationality through the structures of forensic discourse, more in accordance with the organic and centralized nature of Viceregal society.

#### THE OCTOPUS AND THE HYDRA: THEORIES OF INSURRECTION<sup>9</sup>

Be it *the octopus*, a beast with one head and a thousand invasive and destructive arms, systematically seizing what it finds in a centralized, albeit disorganized way,

<sup>9</sup> According to Cope, "Spanish accounts, then, tend to depict the crowd as a vast octopus, a single will with many outreaching tentacles. But the rioters — once the palace was set on fire — may have more closely approximated a hydra, the multi-headed beast of classical lore" (144).

or *the hydra*, the monster with a thousand heads, uncoordinated amidst an unattainable reality, functioning in traditional units of space, action, and time. Douglas Cope describes the theories explaining the Revolt of 1692 in these terms. Through these contrasting approaches each seeks to render a different account of the events that unfolded in Mexico that year, although both have the common goal of making sense of the incidents within the horizons of social experience in Viceregal society, and also within the foreseeable parameters of a well defined rationality.

Amongst the official strategies utilized for the explanation of the events, the principal one consists, as Cope describes, in the attempt to prove a conspiracy theory through the identification of presumed leaders who could be individually blamed for the uprising. With it, is unleashed an entire spectrum of effects derived from the popular mobilization. For the most part, the interrogations managed to corrode the solidarity of the rebels and provoke the outpouring of real or imagined allegations of guilt in order to respond to the torture of the magistrates who questioned suspects once the uprising had concluded. In many instances, such as that of the *mestizo* shoemaker Miguel González, the interrogation techniques caused that the accused not only incriminates himself, but also denounces circumstantial accomplices which, consciously or not, would have accepted food, clothing, money, and varied goods obtained by insurgent rebels in the looting of stores and market stalls around the Alhóndiga. At the same time, there were attempts to justify incarcerations with material evidence, preferably money that was found in certain quantities in the hands of day laborers or artisans. This was the case of laborer José Ramos, detained for carrying *pesos* and not *reales* or currency of lesser value which corresponded to his wages. Others, such as Felipe de la Cruz, attempted to lie in order to save themselves by proposing scarcely credible accounts, which in the end resulted in their immediate execution. Other participants were detained for simply having been in the areas surrounding the Alhóndiga at the time of the uprising, or for having belonged at some point to suspicious groups. The case of José de Santos, one-eyed shoemaker, without legs who walked on his knees, is particularly noteworthy. Due to his conspicuous appearance, de Santos was accused by witnesses of being not only a participant in the revolt, but an instigator; witnesses' testimonies put him, in spite of his physical condition, in various places at the same time, during the period when the events unfolded.

#### CLOSINGS AND OPENINGS

The disclosure of the eyewitness' testimonies, aside from reconstructing an empirical account of the uprising and the preceding events from another perspective, offers a series of versions that contrast in form and spirit with the official ones, particularly the one provided by Sigüenza y Góngora. Nonetheless, it is less im-

portant to compare diverging accounts of the event than it is to extract, from the complex textuality we have referred to, some conclusions relating to the construction of historiographic discourse and the implications that these practices may have had on colonial culture.

In the first place, the testimonials provided by the participants in the revolt yield a faint trace of the actions carried out by the masses in the events before and during the uprising. At the same time, they offer a discontinuous outline of self-representation. Due to the very nature of the situation in which these testimonials were produced, the represented subjects seem to be alienated from all forms of individual and collective subjectivity. In fact, the statements made by the suspects do not constitute a reliable declaration, as they were made under coercion, were heavily mediated by viceregal authorities and by the imposition, on a discursive level, of interpretive and representational models formalized by the dominant culture. The application of these models, which was as important in reestablishing social order as the physical punishment of insurgents, has fundamental consequences in the interpretation of this and other insurgencies, in a variety of contexts. It implies, on the one hand, the appropriation of the historicity of colonial subjects and the pilfering of any possibility whatsoever of preserving an autonomous space for subjugated voices. This is specially true in a context such as the one depicted by Sigüenza, where mobilization neither responds to an advanced state of social consciousness nor is substantiated by an organizing apparatus capable of effectively subverting the foundations of a ruling system. Consequently, the insurrection seems limited to its symbolic content and its diagnosis value, which are easily absorbed into the power structure. On the other hand, the alternative discourse of the participants in the uprising, reversely defines the function of the official historiography as a practice conceived and implemented in complicity with the politics of the state. Historiography is then assigned a fundamental role, not only in the organization, but in the construction of history conceived as a reading of the past, and as the interpretation and processing of contemporary times. In a more political evaluation, historiography also plays a pivotal role for the legitimization of power, as well as for the continuity of social control, and the perpetuation of hegemony. As it has been indicated with regard to the accounts of popular insurrections elaborated by public officials, these versions

...may have an "appearance of objectivity," often expressed through an impersonal narrative, but events are in any case included in an explanatory discourse, that attributes them a pre-history and a causality, that are utilized, later on, to legitimate civilizational or repressive actions carried out by the elites in order to eradicate or prevent the violence of insurgency. The rebels are deprived of the right of being subjects of their own revolt [*"sujetos de su propia revuelta"*], and are turned into excuses for a

disciplinary or self-reformatory reflection by colonial or national authorities. (Cusicanqui and Barragán 17)

Also, in contrast to these official reports, on a popular level, the testimonies uncover the complex constituency of the Creole consciousness, which is trapped in the crossroads created by political and cultural struggles. In a study on the American Baroque, Bolívar Echevarría points out the way in which, in fear of barbarism, the Creole sector continued to align itself with the Spaniards in times when the viceregal stability was in crisis, even in instances of advanced consolidation of their sectorial identity. This happened in the midst of their search for a form of hegemony that after a long process of differentiation >from Peninsular power, would, in turn, revolt against metropolitan structures. The cultivated and ubiquitous *Criollos*, who acted in colonial Mexico in complicity with the *status quo*, did not hesitate in exploring the indigenous cultural matrix as the source for their own process of sectorial differentiation (the Creole as the natural depository of pre-Hispanic legacies). Nonetheless, in facing a crisis within the existing order, the meaning of that *other* culture, attains a negative and threatening connotation for Creole population. In other words, the *other*, which retains his interest as a cultural object, cannot be assimilated as a political and as a social subject.

In this sense, the ideology of racism —or, we could say, the politics of race— appears, in the colonial context, as a cultural construct of variable importance and oscillating value, depending on the historical junctures and the sectorial alliances that became necessary in different circumstances in order to solidify the increasing power of the *criollos* in Mexico's pre-national stages. The "civilizing" colonialist project had relegated the empirical reality and the irreducible materiality of subjugated sectors to the very edge of civility itself. The corporeal experience, the primary values of survival, and the right of self-realization of Indian populations were considered as de-centered, basically unproductive, and isolated practices. Nevertheless, popular mobilizations demonstrated that even in their disperse and discontinuous nature, the polarization of the world divided by violence and counter-violence denotes an essential instability in a system whose legitimizing foundations seem to rest upon the inappealability of the dominators and the irrepresentability of the dominated. The Indian and the colonial castes had been effectively assimilated by the representational strategies of colonial power. This power had assigned them a place on the stage where the games and festivities of absolute power were played out, and where subaltern groups acted the part of the "extras" always located in the background of colonial power. But the uprising placed these actors, even for the short period in which the events unfolded, on the forefront of the historical platform, through the mobilization, the rebelliousness, and the association with those who, even in a temporary manner, expressed their solidarity with them. This is why the historiographical practice of

the *letrados* became such an important tool in the colonial period, and why individuals who were located at the center of Viceregal society understood the symbolic and strategic meaning of their work. This also explains the urgency that Sigüenza y Góngora, as well as other officials of the Viceregal administration felt during the events of June 1692, in saving from the fire and the rage of the crowd, the archives housed at the Alhóndiga, which chronicled the history of colonial domination, and registered their own personal and collective involvement in the "civilizing" process implemented in Mexico.

Finally the dual perspective of the uprising demonstrates, in varied aspects, the symbolic battle of cultures in conflict within colonial society. Accounts make reference to the deployment of religious symbols that found their place in the midst of the uprising. They mention, for instance, the cross, the religious images toted in the procession in order to conjure the demonic force of mass chaos, the administering of the Eucharist amidst the tumult to the dying on both fronts, the litanies and sermons of the pontiffs who attempt to contain the outrage of the populace, the allusions to the historical patrimony of dominating sectors. But the popular sector also exhibited its own paraphernalia of improvised flags, banners, makeshift weapons and offensive countersigns which included vulgarities aimed at the ecclesiastic and political authorities. If the measures of the Viceroy and the proceedings of the Real Audience, seek to reestablish an order suspended by the parentheses of the uprising, the actions of the populace reveal a symbolic display of alternative values, interests, and behaviors. According to the dominant conception of history and civil life, these practices manifests themselves as fragmentary, discontinuous, and disperse, and as a form of collective but inorganic action that is strongly attached to the empirical, the material, and the immediate. The appropriation of goods and the attempts to conceal the plunder from authorities, the contradictory web of false testimonies that, like Sigüenza's report, stake their claim to the truth, the emphasis on the wounded, mutilated and executed bodies hung for public display, the fire that consumed the patrimony of an ostentatious, exclusive, and repressive culture, created a counterpoint that is difficult to assimilate and absorb through the purifying and selective codes of classic historiography.

The discourses produced by dominated sectors, constitute themselves a battleground mined by the ideological and cultural strategies of dominant cultures. Subaltern textuality can be seen, then, as a symbolic territory re-colonized, re-appropriated, recuperated from the self-legitimizing and disciplinary rhetoric of the imperial *other*. The significance of oppressed subjectivities appears as merely residual, interstitial, inorganic, if seen from the centralizing and rationalizing perspective of the elite. Only the words and the writing of the dominator create, within the context of colonialism, order, truth, reality. The voice of the subaltern is used for the affirmation of the models of universality on which the identity of

the Self and the alterity of the *Other* are founded. If the word reaffirms, then, its privilege as a vehicle for entering into the grand narrative of Occidentalism, and as the way to inscribe *the local* within *the universal* or *the global* upon which imperial domination is founded, the interruptions of dominant discourses by the reverse practices of dominated sectors manage to cancel, if only provisionally, the impunity of the masters, by exposing the folds of the multiple, the hybrid, the material, which is suddenly inserted in the vulnerable continuity of power.

The fragmentary discourses and discontinuous practices we have been referring to here, as much as the silences, contradictions, and fallacies included in the discourses subjugated by Viceregal authorities, constitute, by their own merit, alternatives to the discourses of power. These alternative practices and discourses emerge from what we could call a *productive irrationality* that follows its own insurrectional logic, and its own liberating utopia, one that is difficult to assimilate through the methods of historiographic organization or the mannerisms of Western civility. They give evidence of the existence of marginal but productive epistemological locations, and reveal the ghostly presence of *other* agencies, *other* agendas, and *other* subjects.

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