Quarta Orbis Pars: Monologizing the New World

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Monologizing the New World

MICHAEL PALENCIA-ROTH

"It is a terrible arrogance to assume that, to be happy, everyone should become European."
(Israel Berlin 196)

Introduction

One of the many insights of Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), the Russian cultural and literary critic, was his conception of the difference between two different views of the world, views he termed monologic and dialogic. Monologism he defined as the cast of mind which creates unitary systems. Among the great systematizers in the western tradition may be counted, according to Bakhtin, philosophers like Hegel, cultural and economic theorists like Marx, most western novelists except for Dostoevsky, and psychological systematizers like Freud. In the words of Gary Saul Morson (American Scholar, 205), monologic writers and thinkers generalize human actions, making them into a system "governed by a set of rules, next derive norms from those rules, and finally deny that anything of significance has been left out in the process." Monologic thinkers believe that the entire world makes sense and that its sense may be understood by using the proper key which, typically, they alone possess. In other words, everything of significance can be understood in terms of the monologic thinker's system. Epistemological or hermeneutic gaps and problems are considered to be the fault of the interpreter or theorist, especially the fault of another interpreter or theorist. This is a way of knowing which is totalizing. It is not only a way of knowing, however. It can also be a way of acting, of being in the world. The second of these terms, dialogism, represents what Bakhtin believed to be a better way of understanding the world and of being in it. This way is interactive and relatively non-hierarchical. Here the main mode of understanding and acting is
dialogue; here there is the give-and-take of "conversation" between two or more essentially equal participants. Here the world, rather than being monologic and unitary, is dialogic, polyphonic and multiple.

As far as I know, Bakhtin does not use monologism and dialogism (or polyphony, a related, looser, and somewhat more inclusive term) to explore issues in cross-cultural analysis or in the analysis of intcivilizational encounters. Indeed his cultural analyses and comments rarely have a comparative cultural dimension at all. But since in my view monologism and dialogism are applicable to comparative civilizational analysis, I should like to extend these two Bakhtinian categories to a particular intercivilizational encounter: that of Europe and the New World in the early colonial period. The monologic process is centripetal in its force, focusing behavior, policy, texts, and analyses around a central and centralizing point. The dialogic process is centrifugal, diffusing all of these from the central point, or from several points. The first is movement in, the second movement out; the first goes toward order and hierarchy, the second toward disorder and a lack of hierarchy; the first emphasizes conquest, the second freedom. In rough terms, monologism is logically and metaphorically analogous to the civilizing process; dialogism to that rara avis, intercivilizational tolerance. Monologism belongs largely to the political arena; dialogism, Bakhtin would say, to the aesthetic and the ethical. From this perspective, the European conquest of the New World, the way in which the New World was "civilized," was a monologic enterprise with precious few, if any, dialogic interludes. Even the most progressive and liberal actors in the 16th century were, I believe, monologic. In this essay I wish to reflect on some of the ways in which monologism originated, worked, and eventually triumphed in European actions in—and conceptions of—the New World by the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th centuries.

The techniques of monologism may be themselves expressed in a number of ways. Some of the ones I would like to explore here are: the rhetoric of affirmation or negation (and related procedures like the use of positive or negative similes, similatio or dissimilatio); hierarchization; categorization; objectification; inclusion (or incorporation or assimilation) and exclusion; map-
ping; symbolization. Monologic techniques overlap and, though most of them are present throughout the first 150 years of New World history, at certain times some of them acquire more importance than at others in European civilizing strategies.

The period I am discussing can be divided into a number of eras. First, of course, there is the Columbus era, which lasted until 1506. Then there is a flurry of activity in theology and law, with particularly important events occurring between 1510 and 1513. Following that is the invasion and conquest of Tenochtitlán, from, roughly, 1519 to 1523. The twenty years at mid-century saw enormous activity in law and theology again, exemplified by the New Laws of 1542, the debates between Sepúlveda and Las Casas, and the so-called “duda indiana” or doubt about the Indies. Such doubt had its analogues in literature and historiography or ethnography a bit later in the century, and I look at some 16th-century altercations and doubts under the rubric of “tergiversations.” I follow that section by comments on how the New World became a single object for European consciousness. This reductionism became particularly strong during the latter part of the 16th and early part of the 17th centuries. The idea of the *Quarta Orbis Pars*, or the fourth part of the world, plays a central role in this process.

II. The Columbus Era

Columbus is the first monologic actor and thinker in the European history of the New World. In his actions and his writing, he fitted everything into his comprehensive vision of the world and especially into his sense of his mission in life. This particular kind of monologism Bakhtin would call theoretism. Part of Columbus’s theoretism was that when he discovered islands near “India” he appropriated them legally on October 12, 1492, for the King and Queen of Spain. That mistaken theoretism colored everything he wrote and thought about “India,” a kingdom, in his mind, on the outskirts of Cathay. Even by the time of his death in 1506 he did not realize the extent of his confusion, though he sometimes suspected that things were more complicated than he at first thought.

Given the magnitude of his mistake, some may wonder how he could have expressed such confidence in his enterprise. But it was, after all, in his interests to be confident. On April 17, 1492,
and again on April 30 of that year, Columbus and the Spanish monarchs reached what has come to be known as the “Capitulations.” These documents set out in some detail the benefits that were to accrue to Columbus as the result of his discoveries and acquisitions: the office of Viceroy and Governor General of the new dominions; one tenth of all the profits from sale, barter, discovery, and acquisition in the new lands; the title of Admiral of the Ocean Sea and of “don,” a title to belong to him and his descendants in perpetuity. The Crown’s confidence in dispensing rights over unknown territories exemplifies monologism at work. It could make these promises because, after all, the King and Queen belonged to the one true, universal faith. They considered it their royal and Christian duty to propagate that faith in “the name of the Holy Trinity and Eternal Unity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost” (Gibson 29).

Monologism tends to emphasize not presences in other cultures but absences, deficiencies, negations. The discovery of the New World was, above all, a multi-faceted discovery of both presence and absence. That is, Columbus discovered both what was there and what was not there, both the familiar and the unfamiliar. The unfamiliar in particular gave rise to a kind of epistemological gap which, in turn, led both to a rhetoric of negation and then to an attempt to fill that gap. That attempt required, in part, a series of rhetorical strategies: forced comparisons, followed by thinking which emphasized differences and hierarchies in relation to a general process (sometimes explicitly expressed, sometimes not) of assimilation. Part of this is the normal reaction of the human mind on being confronted by a new situation. But part of this is also due to an obsessively monologizing cast of mind.

Ten days after sailing from the Canary Islands, on September 16th, Columbus commented that they had “met with very temperate breezes, so that it was a great delight to enjoy the mornings, and nothing was lacking except to hear nightingales. [The weather, he continued,] was like April in Andalusia” (Parry & Keith, New Iberian World II:25). This is the first of many such comments, all having in common the rhetorical structure of the simile, positively expressed. This is the trope of similatio. The sea is at one point said to be “like the river in Seville” (October 8th, Parry & Keith, New Iberian World II:28). Once they landed, the trees were
sometimes described as “all green and with leaves like those of Castile in the month of April and May” (October 14th, Parry & Keith, New Iberian World II: 31). Some of the fish were like those of Castile and Columbus even heard “nightingales and other birds, singing like those of Castile” (December 7th, Parry & Keith, New Iberian World II: 34). As has been noted by a number of commentators, nightingales are European birds and not native to the Caribbean. Such mistakes and similes make the New World seem familiar.

And yet, that New World was also viewed as profoundly strange, exotic, even dangerous. The trope of dissimilatio was used to describe the people in particular. First of all, they were pagan, pleased by “things of little value” (October 12th, Parry & Keith, New Iberian World II: 29), and “very deficient in everything” (II: 30). They all went around “naked as their mothers bore them, and the women also.” No one “was over thirty years of age.” Their hair was “coarse, almost like the hairs of a horse’s tail, and short” (II: 30). Some of them were “painted black,” some “white and some red and some in any colour” (II: 30). They did “not bear arms” and indeed “cut themselves through ignorance” when shown a sword. They had “no iron” and “no creed” (II: 30).

Two contradictory images are being constructed here. One is Edenic and Adamic. These people, lacking iron, live in a kind of golden age when nakedness, youth, innocence, and peace were the norm. Such remarks belong to a long tradition in European intellectual history, the myth of the golden age. Columbus, like all travellers, was seeing the new in terms of the old. He was fitting his experiences into European traditions. The other image is of an inferior people with marked “deficiencies.” Significantly, they are ignorant of the “true” value of things, for they willingly trade things of greater value (gold, parrots) for “things of little value” (glass beads, caps, hawks’ bells). Their ignorance, combined with a kind of simple alertness, would make them “good servants,” writes Columbus (II: 30), and he also believes that they can be made into Christians. In other words, deficiencies, negations, differences all contribute to placing these people into a kind of epistemological and hermeneutical void. New World persons are primarily empty vessels, waiting to be filled by European knowledge, religion, customs, social structures. They are less candidates

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for interaction or dialogue than for assimilation or incorporation.

The new people of the New World, thus "categorized," can be compared to Europeans and found to be "less than" civilized. Furthermore, being inferior they are to be assimilated to the superior culture, and on European terms: they will become servants in a new European society in the New World. Eventually (though Columbus does not state this as a desirable policy until the Memorandum to Torres in 1494) they will become slaves. Incorporation and assimilation do not mean "being made equal"; here they mean "being fitted into a superior system," as a servant is fitted into a family, a slave into a social structure, or nuts and bolts into a machine. Like nuts and bolts, servants and slaves are interchangeable with other parts performing the same function. And not only are they interchangeable among themselves, but they are also exchangeable with other commodities. Later in the 16th century, prefiguring the Marxian metaphor by 300 years, African slaves were referred to as "piezas" or "pieces," valued only as units of labor.

The "Letter to Santangel of 1493" brought news of the discoveries to all of Spain and soon to all of Europe. It must not be forgotten that the "Letter" serves also as a kind of progress report and grant application for a second voyage. It would not have been effective for Columbus to highlight difficulties or to present the new-found people as inhospitable. Thus we read enthusiastic comments on the wonderful weather in the Indies, as well as descriptions of fertile land and gentle harbors, of the friendliness of the people, and of how amenable they are to becoming good and loyal subjects of the Crown. The image of the New World in the "Letter" is on the whole more positive than that unfolded, day by day, in the diary.

There are absences and negations, to be sure. One interesting absence relevant to my analysis here is the failure of a certain expectation. "In these islands," Columbus states, "I have so far found no human monstrosities, as many expected, on the contrary, among all these people good looks are esteemed" (Morison Journals and other Documents, 185). The monstrosities referred to are those from the traditions of Greek and Roman ethnographic depictions of peoples in distant places and of medieval travel lit-
literature: cyclopean people, sciopods, acephaloii, cynocephaloii, bicephaloii, and the like. One particular monster, however, is present by report, though by report only: the man-eater, who lives on an island called "Quaris" in some editions (unnamed in others) which is "the second at the entrance to the Indies" (Morison Journals and other Documents, 185). This man-eater is very fierce, has many canoes and makes a practice of ranging through "all the islands of India and [pillaging] and [taking] as much as [he] can" (Morison Journals and other Documents, 185). These male warriors habitually mate, says Columbus, with the women of an island called Matinino or Matremonio (depending on the edition one consults), "which is the first island met on the way from Spain to the Indies" (Morison Journals and other Documents, 185). These women, identified by Columbus's contemporaries as Amazons, live without men except for certain times of the year, and they rule over their own independent and warlike kingdom. The unfamiliar is thus incorporated into traditional European mythologies, in this case the tradition of the monster and the myth of the Amazons. Both islands—Quaris and Matinino—make it on to the first map we have of the New World, a sketch map done according to instructions of Columbus [Figure 1], and onto other early

![Figure 1. Alessandro Zorzi, Sketch Map of the New World According to Instructions by Christopher Columbus (1500). From Emerson Fite and Archibald Freeman, A Book of Old Maps Delineating American History Down to the Close of the Revolutionary War (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926). Courtesy, University of Illinois Library](image-url)
maps of the New World. Thus is myth turned into history, at least for a while.

Vespucci’s Mundus Novus letter of 1503, probably more than any other single document in the early years of the European history of the New World, shaped Europe’s views on it and led, as we know, to the naming of the Quarta Orbis Pars as “America.”

Prominent in that letter is a description of the people of Brazil, a description which, aside from Brother Ramón Pané’s brief work on the Indians of Hispaniola, may be considered the first notable ethnographic commentary on New World people. As discourse, it is monologic, punctuated by moments of apparent tolerance and openness.

After stating that on this voyage he found “a continent more densely peopled and abounding in animals than our Europe or Asia or Africa, and, in addition, a climate milder and more delightful than in any other region known to us” (Vespucci 1), Vespucci described the people. They were, he said, “gentle and amenable” (Vespucci 5). They went around naked. They had “large, square-built bodies, well-formed and proportioned” (Vespucci 5). They were “agile and dignified in their movement” (Vespucci 5). Yet they “destroyed” their countenances by carving holes in them, and they had strange sexual practices.

Their lack of moderation in sexual matters seems to lead Vespucci by associative thinking to other lacks. These people also had no property, no kings, no government, no laws, no institution of marriage, and no religion, not even idolatry. We have seen such a series of negations before, in the diary of Columbus and in his “Letter to Santangel.” Here, however, the list is longer, more inclusive, and presented in an apparently random fashion. The conclusion to all these negations at this point is that New World people somehow “live according to nature, and may be called Epicureans rather than Stoics” (Vespucci 6).

The categories of Epicureanism and Stoicism were two conventional ways, in and before the 16th century, of describing attitudes toward life in non-Christian contexts. Europeans associated Epicureanism with the pursuit of pleasure, a theme that Vespucci picked up again later in the letter.

As the pagan is somehow akin to the “natural,” and “nature” synonymous with disorder, so Vespucci next went on to discuss disorder in warfare. And the greatest example of disorder was the
practice of cannibalism, a practice considered "natural" by the Indians, who commented on the tastiness of human flesh. At that point, as if the term "flesh" reminded him of earlier comments, Vespucci discussed the physical beauty of Indian women. From there it was a short step to sex, from there a shorter one to the excessive lustfulness of the women, and from there a leap to the topic of the Indian's life-span. They lived 150 years (Vespucci 7).

The apparent dialogic openness toward New World nature and culture which initiated this jumbled series of descriptions turns out to be an illusion. On virtually every count, the European way of doing things is shown to be superior: marriage, sex, social institutions, warfare, even diet. Vespucci seems to have been as much of a monologist as Columbus was. European readers of the letter most likely concluded that these New World people could use some civilizing.

Cannibals were much on Europeans' minds at that time. For instance, in the same year that Vespucci wrote his letter, the Spanish Crown authored what I have called "The Cannibal Law," a law which I have analyzed elsewhere. This document legalized the enslavement of cannibals, but only of cannibals, in the New World. The effect, predictably enough, was devastating on New World populations, for the identification of Indians as cannibals became economically worthwhile and morally justified. Whole populations were so identified until what we know as "The Caribbean" or "The Sea of Cannibals" was so named. I have described this process in an essay entitled "Mapping the Caribbean," and so shall not repeat my arguments here. Suffice it to say that the attribution of cannibalism to native Americans, in my view, was of enormous importance in the conquest and colonization of the New World and in the formation of the European ideological image of it.

III. Theology and Law

In 1510 an extraordinary document was drawn up by Palacios Rubios at the command of the Crown, a document which functioned to sanction—legally, theologically, morally—the civilizing process in the New World. This document was known as the "Requerimiento" or the Requirement. Even the very title, "Requirement," suggests the monologic imperative; a "requirement" is not
"optional." Ostensibly and theoretically, the Requirement worked in two ways. First, it prevented the Spanish from acting with unnecessary cruelty toward Indians. Second, it educated Indians in the cultural and religious values of the Spanish. In practice, however, it primarily assuaged the consciences of Spaniards as they forcibly overwhelmed the Indians and committed atrocities.

The Crown decreed that Spaniards must read the Requirement out loud to Indians before undertaking any aggressive actions. As has generally been pointed out, often the Requirement was read out of earshot, from behind a forest of trees, or from shipboard a hundred yards from shore, or it was read to a village asleep, just before an attack at dawn. Moreover, it was usually read in Spanish to a people who up to that moment probably had not heard a syllable of that language spoken. Thus was the letter of the law observed.

According to the Requirement, warfare would in each case be prevented if the Indians assented to the demands and instructions of the Requirement. The document first instructed the Indians in Christian cosmology, letting them know that the Crown, "subduers of barbarous nations," was concerned to teach the Indians how "the Lord our God ... created Heaven and Earth, and one man and one woman, of whom you and we ... were and are descendants." (Parry & Keith, New Iberian World I: 289). The document then went on to describe the history of Christianity and the establishment of the Pope, whose duty was "to judge and govern all Christians, Moors, Jews, Gentiles, and all other sects" (Parry & Keith, New Iberian World I: 289). One such Pope, continued the document, gave to the Spanish Crown the lands on which the Indians are living. Now emissaries from the Crown were here to notify them that they now may serve their Highnesses as good and loyal subjects. The document then informed the Indians, contradicting the immediacy insisted upon in the previous clause, that they could take whatever time was "necessary" to "understand and deliberate" ("entenderlo y deliberar") what has been told them, and, then, after that, to "acknowledge the Church as the Ruler and Superior of the whole world" and the Spanish Crown as their masters.

The consequences of resistance were dire. First of all war, and "in all ways and manners." Second, forced submission to "the
yoke and obedience of the Church and their Highnesses." Further, the wives and children of the Indians were to be taken away and enslaved, to be sold and disposed of as the Crown commanded. Moreover, the Indians' goods were to be confiscated, and the "deaths and losses accruing from this" process were, the document continued, entirely the fault of the Indians. At the end, a notary was requested to give testimony in writing that the Requirement had indeed been read to the Indians and that the law had been duly observed (all quotations from Parry & Keith, New Iberian World I: 290). The conquest and colonization of the Indies was a thoroughly legal affair.

Las Casas states in Historia de las Indias that in the early 1500's on the island of Hispaniola Indians were dying in great numbers. Spaniards who possessed Indians, Las Casas writes, thought of them only as animals and that, when Indians died, the Spanish regretted only the loss of labor (Las Casas, Historia de las Indias II: 438). Such callousness and indifference seemed to be the order of the day. The Dominicans on the island decided to protest Spanish treatment of Indians. Chosen as the instrument of protest was Antonio Montesinos, known, says Las Casas, as a gifted and effective preacher (Historia de las Indias II: 440). On Advent Sunday, therefore, in 1511, Montesinos ascended the pulpit in his church in Santo Domingo and identified the text of his sermon as Ego vox clamantis in deserto, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness." He proceeded to berate the Spanish, telling them that they all lived "in mortal sin," and that they would all die in that state:

By what right do you hold these Indians in such cruel and horrible servitude? By what authority did you make unprovoked war on these people, living in peace and quiet on their land, and with unheard-of savagery kill and consume so great a number of them? . . . Are they not men? Have they no soul, no reason? Are you not required to love them as you love yourselves? Do you not understand this? Do you not feel it? How can you be sunk so deep in unfeeling sleep? (Parry & Keith, New Iberian World II: 310)

It is the cruel indifference of monologism that is attacked here; and the principle weapons of that attack are such dialogic terms as love, understanding, and feeling. Despite using these terms, however, Montesinos was a confirmed monologist. After all, he was in the New World on an evangelizing mission. Like most mo-
nologists, he did not see—or, if he saw, did not correct—the contradic-
tions of his position. Truly to love and understand other per-
sons dialogically requires tolerance of their differences, accept-
tance of their desires for independence, and an awareness of
their potential continually to surprise. Bakhtin calls this awareness
a recognition of the unfinalizability of the person, and it is a key
concept in his ethics.29

Returning to the straw hut that served him and his companions
as their monastery, Montesinos awaited the response. It came that
evening. Don Diego Colón, son of Cristóbal Colón, formally pro-
tested the words of Montesinos to his superior and requested a
retraction. The Vicar replied that the sermon in fact represented
the feelings of all the Dominicans. The bureaucrats repeated
their protests; the Vicar agreed to have the matter addressed at
the next Sunday sermon, and the bureaucrats believed that they
had won the desired retraction. The next Sunday, however,
Montesinos repeated and intensified the message of the previous
sermon. The battle was joined. Seething with rage (“furibundos,”
_Historia de las Indias_ II: 445), the Spaniards decided to write to the
King that these Dominican friars were destroying the foundations
of New World and preaching against the commands of His High-
ness (“sembrando doctrina nueva ... contra lo que Su Alteza
había ordenado” _Historia de las Indias_ II: 445).

The royal response was, write Parry & Keith, “coldly legalistic
and wholly unsympathetic to the Dominican position” (Parry &
Keith, _New Iberian World_ II: 312). The Crown affirmed its own
strict monologism. The entire sermon of Montesinos, stated the
Crown, was without foundation theologically or legally. Neither
canon law nor civil law supported such an attack on government
policy and on people acting within governmental guidelines.
Moreover, the matter was logically so transparent that even lay-
men could understand it. The donation made to Spain by Pope
Alexander VI of “all the islands and mainlands discovered” (Parry
& Keith, _New Iberian World_ II: 312) had made it crystal clear that
Spain was in the New World “in accord both with human and
divine law” (II: 313). Further, the Dominicans, despite being well-
intentioned, simply “failed to understand the Holy Scriptures as
they ought” (II: 313). They were therefore ordered, continued
the Crown, not to speak about these matters, “either in public or
in secret, except to say that if they held those opinions it was be-
cause they were not informed of the right We had to those is-
lands" (II: 313). The Crown concluded: if the Dominicans did not
agree to these conditions, then they would be forcibly deported.
Propagating such “pernicious opinions” would do “great damage
to things there” (II: 313). Significantly, the friars’ activities were
considered to have been caused by an inability to understand the
Scriptures, and the keys to that understanding are held only by
the Crown and by Rome. Apparently no Dominican had the right
to interpret Scripture on his own or to examine his conscience.
The royal monologic mind refuses to allow exceptions, either in
word or in deed, to the orthodox position.

Yet the Crown was not totally deaf to entreaties on behalf of the
Indians. In 1512 and 1513, inspired in part by Montesinos and his
colleagues, the Crown created its first fairly systematic legal code
to govern its new lands and peoples. The Laws of Burgos were
considered instruments not of conquest but of governance. They
spelled out, in more detail than was given in previous provisiones,
the obligations of the Spaniards toward the Indians, especially
those Spaniards identified as encomenderos. These Spaniards were
obliged to indoctrinate the Indians in “the things of our faith”
(Gibson 62), and obliged as well to feed them and to help them
in times of need, providing suitable medical relief and moral
comfort. In return for such care and comfort of their bodies and
souls, the Indians were “commended,” that is, “given in encomienda” (Gibson 63), to the encomenderos, taken from their
original homes and resettled on Spaniards’ estates. Indian vil-
lages were to be “burned, since the Indians [would] have no fur-
ther use for them [and they would] have no reason to return
whence they have been brought” (Gibson 64). However noble a
judicial effort subsequent historians have considered the Laws of
Burgos to be, they were the monologic equivalent of invading
armies, accomplishing by law what would have been accom-
plished by the sword. The Laws made Spanish actions more palat-
able morally by sanctioning them legally.

In return for looking after the Indians’ souls, the Spanish col-
onists in effect appropriated their bodies, making them into ser-
vants for life. Servitude and enslavement became the foundation
on which a Christian and moral edifice was to be built. The Span-
ish, like other Europeans of the time, saw no contradiction be-
tween Christianity and slavery. Slavery was not viewed then with
the same horror that it is today. Moreover, here as elsewhere, monologism tends to subsume contradictions within overarching structures; questionable means are made to yield to desired ends. 

IV. Tenochtitlán

The invasion of Mexico and the conquest of Tenochtitlán brought Spaniards face to face for the first time with a civilization comparable to their own. If it can be demonstrated that the Spanish continued to hold the same attitudes in Mexico that they held up to that point, then we may infer that European monologism functioned regardless of the level of civilization encountered in the New World.

Hernán Cortés, like most Europeans in the New World, had his own axe to grind. He especially needed to make sure that the Spanish Crown interpreted his activities in Mexico as those of the Crown’s loyal and trusted servant, undertaken legally and in the Crown’s best interests. It is for this reason, perhaps, in addition to being trained in the law, that Cortés adhered to the letter of the law more closely than other conquistadors did. At least that is the impression a reader necessarily derives from Cortés’s narration of the events.

As surprised as he may have been to see the advanced material conditions of Aztec civilization, Cortés never wavered in his conviction that he was dealing with barbarians. As he said at one point,

these people live almost like those in Spain, and in as much harmony and order as there, and considering that they are barbarous and so far from the knowledge of God and cut off from all civilized nations, it is truly remarkable to see what they have achieved in all things. (Cortés 108).

And Cortés did marvel at what he saw. Over and over, especially in the important “Second Letter” (October 1520), he compared the cities he encountered with those in Spain. One New World city was “much larger than Granada and much stronger, with as good buildings and many more people than Granada had when it was taken, very much better supplied with the produce of the land” (Cortés 67). Its marketplace had everything: gold, silver,
precious stones, ornaments, wood, charcoal, sweet smelling herbs, barbers, public baths. They also had a very efficient police system (68). The order of government resembled the republics of Venice, Genoa, and Pisa and was superior to the best that Africa had to offer (68). Cortés even praised the Indian system of justice. All of these details, by the way, were observed before he entered the center of the Aztec empire, Tenochtitlán, a city also described with a sense of wonderment. In the letters of Columbus and Vespucci, the absence of material culture was taken as an indication of a state of barbarism. Here, material culture was irrelevant to Cortés’s conviction that the society was barbarous.

Despite his sense of wonder at Indian architecture, markets, institutions and social order, Cortés always remembered that he was on a Christian, civilizing mission. A few pages before the above description, Cortés recounted a battle and the preparations for it with Indians from Cempoalla who were to become his allies in the fight against Montezuma. Coming up to the Cempoallans, not two stones’ throws away, Cortés began to deliver the formal requerimiento through the interpreters who were with me and before a notary, but the longer I spent in admonishing them and requesting peace, the more they pressed us and did us as much harm as they could. Seeing therefore that nothing was to be gained by the requerimiento or protestations we began to defend ourselves as best we could (59).\textsuperscript{58}

This is, of course, the same requerimiento discussed above. Cortés was following the letter of the law. Once the requerimiento was delivered, Cortés and his men could freely engage the Indians in battle. The outcome was so one-sided that it “truly seemed that God was fighting” on the side of the Spanish, for, despite being vastly outnumbered, the Spaniards won.\textsuperscript{54} The conquest of Mexico, in this view, was a defensive action sanctioned and protected by God.

Cortés also made Náhuatl sound exactly like 16th-century Spanish of the court and he used Aztec religious beliefs when they suited his purposes. In the famous first encounter between him and Montezuma, the Aztec ruler gave a long account of the coming of the Spaniards as predicted by Aztec religion.\textsuperscript{56} By having Montezuma speak with a concretely feudalistic and messianic terminology, Cortés merged Montezuma’s voice with his own. Thus, said Cortés, Montezuma explained that a “certain lord” had ruled the Aztecs and that he had returned to his own home. The
Aztecs had always believed that someday one of the descendants of that lord would return to claim his appointed place as ruler over the Aztecs, claiming them as "their vassals" (86). Cortés was, said Montezuma, the representative of that long-awaited ruler "from where the sun rises" and therefore Cortés is "in [his] own land and [his] own house" (86).

Cortés commented in the letter that he let Montezuma "believe that Your Majesty was he whom they were expecting" (87). Here, by an unusual conjunction of circumstances, is monologism at work in two cultures at once. That each interpreter made the events be the outcome of fate was certainly convenient for Cortés. Each interpretation subsumed the images and ideas of the other culture within its own hermeneutic system. Each monologism was, on its own terms, stronger and more persuasive than the other. Hermeneutically, both had equal explanatory power. It is not, as Todorov maintains in The Conquest of America, that the Spanish were superior interpreters of the "signs"; both sign systems were equally comprehensive; both had equally consistent and persuasive interpretations of the events. It is, rather, that the Spanish were the superior military power, had superior weapons and technology, and also were able to take advantage of the Aztec apocalyptic tradition. Thus did Spanish monologism triumph over Aztec monologism.

Despite the dialogue form of the first encounter between Cortés and Montezuma, this exchange was not dialogic. Rather, monologic beliefs and explanations were paraded before each other. Subsequent conversations with Montezuma, especially as described by Bernal Díaz del Castillo, also unfolded along monologic lines, with Cortés informing Montezuma about the "true" nature of the world, of Christianity, of the place of the Emperor Don Carlos in it, and of Cortés's role in all this. Montezuma listened politely as his monologic vision was challenged by the Spanish one. Such a challenge occurred also with the main religious icons of each society. Repeatedly, wrote Bernal Díaz del Castillo, Cortés or his soldiers ascended Aztec sacrificial pyramids or cues and smashed Indian idols. In their place they put icons of the Virgin Mary and ordered Indians to worship her. They saw no irony in these words and actions. Why should they have? After all, monologism does not allow the Other to have an equal voice in the conversation. Rather, from the monologic point of view, separate voices must be merged into the single dominant one. In sum,
the actual civilizational status of New World societies was not particularly relevant to European civilizational thought and to European civilizing strategies in the New World. This is less of a contradiction that one might think; in an important sense, it can be taken as a confirmation that all conquests and colonizations in general are monologizing enterprises.

History, it is said, is written by the victors. The title of one of the most famous collection of indigenous accounts of the conquest of Mexico is, appropriately, *Visión de los vencidos*, compiled by Miguel León-Portilla. The Vision of the Vanquished. The vanquished may have a vision; they may have a voice; but such voices and visions also yield to the monologism of more powerful armies or empires. To be conquered—to be thoroughly colonized—is to lose one's voice. A people conquered may become a people without history.

V. Tergiversations

Montesinos was but the first of a long line of clerics and scholars—among them Vitoria, Cayetano, Soto y Carranza, Cano, Las Casas—who criticized the Spanish presence in the Indies, thus casting the royal mind into what is known as "la duda indiana," the doubts about the legitimacy of Spanish activities in the Indies (see, for instance, books by Carro, Hanke, and Sister Mónica). Such doubts arose because of reports from the Caribbean, from Central America, and from Peru. At one point in the 1530s the Crown seriously considered pulling back, simply abandoning their project in the Indies. According to the documents of the time, it was the moral and "political" condition (giving politics its Aristotelian sense here) of the Indians that persuaded the Crown to continue colonizing the New World. For example, even Francisco de Vitoria, one of the most reasonable and "liberal" of the scholars and theologians who wrote about the Indies and who questioned the presence of Spain in the New World, concluded in his *Relectio de Indis* (1539) that "the Christian princes [can justifiably] make war on the barbarians [the Aztecs in this instance] because they feed on human flesh and because they sacrifice men" (110). Such a war could be legally declared under the principle of the *ius gentium* or the law or right of people, what today we would call "human rights." War on the Aztec elite and
their armies here was seen to be in defense of the common people.

The controversy culminated in Spain at mid-century with a series of debates between Ginés de Sepúlveda and Bartolomé de Las Casas. Sepúlveda’s arguments were based on Aristotelian thought and on the intellectual tradition of the “monster.” In his arguments against Las Casas, as well as in his work on the subject entitled *Democrates secundus, sive de justis belli causis apud Indus*, Sepúlveda invoked the concept of “Just War” in order to justify—logically and morally—both war against Indians and their enslavement. The Indians, he said, were sodomites, cowards, sacrificers of other human beings, and cannibals. Therefore, they were not like other men; he called them *homunculi*. The term *homunculi* is indicative of the tenor and sophistry of the debate. In documents of the time, the term *homunculus* or “little man” identifies a kind of monster or deformed creature associated in medieval medicine with artificial insemination. Being monstrous, *homunculi* need not be treated like other men. Sepúlveda, who never travelled to the New World, knew of Indians only through documents; Indians were textual abstractions to him. But Las Casas, who lived in the Indies for many years, debated from personal experience as well as from theological conviction and canon law perspectives. Las Casas, in one sense, won the debates, for Sepúlveda’s work was effectively silenced. In another sense, however, the debates did not make that much difference, for the colonization of the Indies proceeded apace.

Doubts among 16th-century canon lawyers or theologians resembled—with some interesting differences—those in the literature of the time. On the ceiling of his study Michel de Montaigne had carved a number of sayings from various literatures. Among them is a dialogic insight—a statement from Xenophon—relevant to my argument in this essay: “No man has known, nor will know, anything for certain.” Such intellectual modesty, accompanied by an awareness that everything changes, guided Montaigne as he wrote many of his essays, in particular “Of Cannibals,” an essay written in 1580 and often regarded as one of the few arguments for cultural relativism in European intellectual history. I regard it less an argument for relativism than a plea for polyphony in cultural interpretation.
The basic premise of the essay is simply stated: the values of 16th-century European society are neither universal nor eternal but provincial and ephemeral. They derive not from universal law but from narrow and historically determined self interest. We call “Barbarians,” said Montaigne, echoing the words of Saint Paul (I Corinthians 14: 11), those people who are not like ourselves (Montaigne Oeuvres complètes II: 242). In order to prove his point, Montaigne chose the most extreme example he could find: that of the New World cannibal. His point was not to demonstrate—as some have thought—that New World cannibals were “more civilized” than Europeans. His point, rather, was to unmask the provincial and historically determined aspects of European cultural values.

We tend to associate, Montaigne wrote, the unfamiliar with the false and the familiar with the true. It seems “that we have no other criterion of truth and of what is reasonable than the example and type of the opinions and customs of the country to which we belong: therein [to us] always is the perfect religion, the perfect political system, the perfect and achieved usage in all things” (Montaigne I:275).

Montaigne unmasked the difficulties with this conception of truth by appealing to the concept of nature and by reversing the customary opposition between savagery and civility, of wildness and tameness. The people the New World, said Montaigne, are wild men, just as we call those fruits wild which Nature has produced unaided and in her usual course; whereas, in truth, it is those that we have altered by our skill and removed from the common kind which we ought rather to call wild. (Montaigne I: 275)

The alteration or cultivation of nature, then, is an act of barbarism for Montaigne. The more natural, the less barbarous. The people of the New World are, said Montaigne, “wild in this sense, that they have received in very slight degree the external forms of human intelligence and are still very near to their primitive simplicity. The laws of nature still govern them, very little corrupted by ours” (Montaigne I: 276). Whatever is not natural is bad, corrupt, barbarous, uncivilized. Art and the artificial are not natural. Therefore, since in Europe convention demands that war be conducted according to accepted rules, according to an art, it is by definition barbarous, uncivilized. Warfare conducted by New
World cannibals, since it is artless, is not barbarous. Thus did Montaigne reverse the distinction which Columbus, Vespucci and others had carefully drawn between civilized and non-civilized ways of killing people. Montaigne did not defend New World cannibalism per se. But he refused to condemn it without acknowledging certain horrible practices among Europeans. “I am not sorry,” he said, that we note the savage horribleness there is in such an action [cannibalism]; but indeed I am sorry that, while rightly judging their misdeeds, we are very blind to our own. I think there is more barbarism in eating a living man than a dead one, in rending by torture and racking a body still quick to feel, in slowly roasting it, in giving it to dogs and swine to be torn and eaten (as we have not only read but seen in recent days, . . .) than in roasting and eating it after it is dead. (Montaigne I: 281)

We Europeans, Montaigne went on to say, “surpass [the cannibals] in every sort of barbarism” (Montaigne I: 282).

At the end of the essay, Montaigne recounted the reactions of three Indians who had been brought to France. They found it odd that tall, strong and bearded Europeans “should humble themselves to obey a child [the prince] and that they did not rather choose some one of themselves to command them (Montaigne I: 288). They also found it odd that some people should have everything in the way of material possessions and that others should have nothing, and odder still that the have-nots have submitted to this situation. Whether this conversation actually took place or not, the fact is that for one of the very few times in the history of the conquest the voice of the Other—though mediated through a European—is allowed on a more or less equal footing with European voices.

In another of Montaigne’s essays on the New World, entitled “Of Coaches” and written eight years (in 1588) after “Of Cannibals,” he even attempted to assume the native perspective on first encountering Spanish soldiers. The Indians, said Montaigne, were astonished to see so unexpectedly the arrival of bearded men different from themselves in language, in religion, in bearing, and in aspect, coming from so distant a part of the world which they had never known to be inhabited at all, mounted on great unfamiliar monsters, opposed to those who had never seen, not only a horse, but any beast whatever trained to carry
and support a man or any other burden; furnished with a *shining and hard skin* and armed with a *sharp and glittering weapon*... [my emphasis] (Montaigne II: 1236)  

The few polyphonic or dialogic moments in early New World history seem to belong to literature. And Montaigne was not the only European writer to express sympathy toward New World people. In 1569, Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga published the first part of *La Araucana*, an epic which recounted the wars in Chile between the Spanish and the Indians. In it the Spanish were not the only heroes; Indians were also, in particular an Indian chief named Caupolicán. The Spanish were not individualized but for the most part were presented collectively—as armies, as soldiers, as officers. Although *La Araucana* was enormously successful with readers (there were at least 14 editions between 1569 and 1594, when Ercilla died), the critical response was another matter. It was considered "monstrous" and "acephalous" because it had no clear hero as head (see Chang-Rodriguez & Filer 87). It is not the literary judgment which I note, but the moral one. Europeans in general were reluctant to share the aesthetic limelight with Indians, for it meant granting them comparable moral stature as well.  

Appearing in the early 17th century, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is another work of cross-cultural sympathy, though the sympathy is muted somewhat by Shakespeare's choice of characters to play certain roles. Drawing on the Florio translation of Montaigne's essays for part of his material, Shakespeare embodied the encounter between the civilized and the savage in the relationship between the urbane and wise Prospero and the savage and twisted Caliban. The history of that relationship is paradigmatic of the colonial process: conquest, followed by education ("you taught me language," says Caliban to Prospero, "and my profit on't is I know how to curse" I. ii. 362-63), followed by the colonizer's discomfort with the subaltern's increasing independence, militancy (Caliban wishes that Prospero be destroyed by the bubonic plague), and even delusions of equality (no longer content just to draw wood for Prospero and work as a slave, Caliban wants Prospero's daughter Miranda). On the level of colonial allegory, the story ends with the emancipation of the slave and with the colonizer acknowledging some responsibility for what has happened. "This thing of darkness," says Prospero, "I acknowledge
mine" (V.i. 275-76). Caliban, whose name is anagrammatically constructed from "Canibal," is a morally and emotionally complex New World individual. Shakespeare, unlike Cortés, for example, allowed the New World person to have his own voice though not his own language and, cursing in the colonizer’s tongue, to express anger, desires, and pain. But even Shakespeare, as dialogical a writer as there has been in English literature, did not grant the New World person equality.
VI. Quarta Orbis Pars

The medieval cartographical tradition in Europe, from about the 6th to the 15th century, generally but not always divided the world into three parts: Europe, Africa (or Libya or Ethiopia, as it was sometimes known), and Asia. For Isidore of Seville (d. 636), each of the three parts of the world on his mappamundi was represented by one of the sons of Noah (Harley and Woodward 301-304): Shem for Asia, Japheth for Europe, Ham for Africa. The world was divided by a great “T” (the Mediterranean, which touched on all three parts) and surrounded by a great “O” (the Ocean Sea), hence the name “T and O” for this kind of map [Figures 2 and 3]. For these thousand years there was little European consciousness about a fourth part of the world, a quarta orbis pars. This schematization was not without its influence in early New World history. For example, according to the capitulations of 1492 between the kings of Spain and Columbus, the title which would reward Columbus for his discoveries was “Admiral of the Ocean Sea.” The “Ocean Sea” referred to is that sea which, in the Isidoran conception of the world, surrounds the earth.

A great many medieval maps in Europe were, as much as anything, mental images or “idealized” conceptions of the world. Many maps, for example, were centered around Jerusalem. They were also “oriented” toward the East, where the earthly paradise was thought to be. For instance, a particularly famous mappamundi—the Ebstorf World Map from the 13th century—conceived of the world as constructed on the body of Christ. At the top of the map, at Christ’s head, one may find the earthly paradise (the map was sited toward the east). At his left hand, at the outer edges of the world, may be found a number of monstrous races (see Harley and Woodward 291; 310; Rosien, passim). Such mappae-mundi were, then, primarily “schema,” symbolic depictions of the world which organized it more according to conceptual and theological categories than according to criteria of geographical “realism” or “verisimilitude.” It did not make much difference if the distances between cities were inaccurate (distance was often measured by the impressionistic method of the estimated days of travel), or if coastlines were not drawn to scale.

During the first century after 1492 two cartographical strategies sometimes came into conflict. One continued the medieval
mappaemundi tradition, which emphasized the mapmaker’s mental image of the New World. This may be called a kind of cartographical theoretism and is at bottom a myth-making drive. The other was the drive toward accurate geographical representation. Both are strategies of ordering and identification, but the first is centripetal and the second, by contrast, more centrifugal; the first
more ideological and the second more particularistic; the first more religious and medieval and the second more scientific and pragmatic, more open to revision. Sometimes the two strategies found expression on the same map. The first map we possess of the New World, the so-called Zorzi Sketch Map of 1500 [Figure 1], shows both strategies at work. On one hand, there is much in this map that is recognizable today. On the other, as I indicated earlier, two islands which make it on to this map on the basis of hearsay only, an island of cannibals and an island of Amazons, have since disappeared.

Cartographical legends continued to exert a powerful influence on the European mind well into the 16th century. Even as late as 1515, for example, when it should have been clear that New World islands were not on the outskirts of Japan (or Cipangu, as it was known to Polo and others), Schöner's globe [Figure 4] placed Japan not too far from Cuba. The point here is not to ridicule these kinds of mistakes but to demonstrate, rather, the hold on the mind that a tradition, true or not, or that an image, true or not, can have. When those traditions or images are transformed into cultural symbols, and those symbols are taken to represent the culture as a whole, then we have the iconographic analogue of a monologism expressed through language in epistemology, in hermeneutics, in systemic thought.

Even the term "Quarta Orbis Pars" is monologic, centripetal. That is, the fourth part of the world is added to the first three parts, in the European scheme of things. America is swallowed up, engulfed, by the European comographic and cartographic tradition. There are, of course, numerous examples of the New World (or the "Mundus Novus") being labelled the "Quarta Orbis Pars." A typical one comes from the middle of the 16th century, the New World map of Diogo Homem, a cartographer of the Portuguese school [Figure 5]. Like most maps from the mid 16th century, it was more accurate geographically than maps fifty years earlier, and yet it was also influenced by myths and hearsay, as well as by the more sensationalistic aspects of New World reality. The pictorial tradition continued to be strong. Myths and sensationalist stories often were given iconographic treatment on maps in the 16th century. That was the case from early on in the history of New World cartography. There are literally hundreds of ex-
amples. Waldseemüller's *Carta Marina* of 1516 is one, and on it he did not confine his sensationalism to the New World. He included, for instance, a cannibal family on the northern coast of South America [Figure 6], a cannibal scene on the island of Java, a portrait of Prester John on his throne in Ethiopia, and another one of the Great Khan (or Chan) on his throne, near Cathay. It's as though, twenty-four years after Columbus's landfall, Waldseemüller were returning to the medieval travel tradition—the Letter of Prester John, Mandeville, Marco Polo, and others—and to Columbus as his authorities, neglecting the explorations of Europeans after 1492.

Iconography concerning the New World is not limited to maps, of course. More important than icons on maps are those which are made into cultural symbols. Here the designation "America" is significant. The very first representation of New World people as a social group, a woodcut which accompanies Vespucci's *Mundus Novus* letter when it was published in Germany in 1505, is of cannibals [Figure 7]. The woodcut is entitled "Americans." The message is unmistakeable. All New World people are savage. This iconographic symbolization of America is repeated often throughout the 16th century. The *Quarta Orbis*
Pars thus must be conquered if the New World is in fact to become the fourth part of the civilized world. That message was put across with superb allegorical clarity in 1595 in a work by Paolo Farinati, entitled "America," one of four lunettes depicting each of the four continents [Figure 8]. Farinati depicts, in a nutshell,
the basic conflict concerning savage America and civilized Europe in the 16th century. Here America is allegorized as a male cannibal (that in itself is unusual, though it accords with the documents, most of which treat men rather than women). Seated in the middle of the picture and engaged in roasting a human shoulder and arm, the cannibal has turned his face to his right (not to his left, the “sinister” side of the body) in order to contemplate the crucifix. Iconographically, the message is clear: by turning away from cannibalism and toward Christianity—and all that European Christendom implied in the 16th century—the savage will turn toward civilization. This turn symbolizes both socialization and salvation. Here, in iconographic terms, is depicted the monologizing dynamics of letters like that of Columbus, of documents like the requerimiento, of sets of laws like those of Burgos, of actions and self-justifications like those of Cortés, of christianizing ethnographies like those of Las Casas and Acosta, even of the monologic thrust of 16th-century cosmography.

VII. Final Unfinalizing Comments

Is the New World an isolated instance or an example typical of other conquering and colonizing powers? Are all conquests and colonizations monologic? Are Bakhtinian categories—monologism and dialogism, single voice and multiple voice, polyphony, systematization, unfinalizability, centripetal vs. centrifugal, and so on—useful for comparative civilizational analysis? I believe that they are, for they draw attention away from the comparison of civilizations as static and complete entities and toward processes. To discuss civilizations as if they were static is, in my view, to engage in the same kind of monologizing discourse that characterized 15th- and 16th-century explorers, conquerors, colonists, and evangelists. Dialogic terms focus the attention, too, on the voices in texts and of the actors in intercivilizational encounters. They remind us that individuals make history, not abstractions, individuals with particular and particularizing voices who in one way or another shape the worlds they encounter.

In some ways the equivalents of 16th-century monologizing processes continue into the present. Similar battles, with similar results, are being waged right now in the more remote regions of the New World, especially in and near Amazonia. The monologic
devastation of New World peoples and nature now is driven less by gold and by religious values than by more pedestrian materialistic and capitalist ones: wood, rubber, oil. And the monologizing powers in the New World have themselves changed. Whereas once monologism was exerted from Europe, now the monologic pressure comes from the urbanized areas of Latin America, as well as from the United States. Despite the tripartite unity implied by the name “America”—north, central, and south—this fourth part of the world has in effect been divided into many pieces, into a fragmented world in which monologizing voices strive for dominance. It is difficult to maintain that there is a true dialogue between north and south, between White and Indian, or between White and other races, a dialogue in which equal weight is given to all parties in the conversation.

“The consciousness of being separate,” declared Octavio Paz in his Nobel Address of 1990, “is a constant feature of our [Latin American] spiritual history. Such separation is sometimes experienced as a wound” (Paz 8). Separateness can lead, of course, to an objectification of otherness, of difference, which feels like a permanent wound. “Other than,” “separate from” and “different than” can mean “less than.” All of these issues belong to monologism. Paz is not alone in his views; moreover, like many Latin American intellectuals, he chooses to define himself and his culture against the background of the colonization of the New World. To be a Latin American today is, I believe, to be continuously aware of a time when European monologism triumphed and when the fourth part of the world—which was there from the beginning—was given its European name, shape and being.

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Michael Palencia-Roth


Vespucci, Amerigo. Mundus Novus. Letter to Lorenzo Pietro de Medici. [Written 1503] Translated by George Tyler Northup. Vespucci Re-


NOTES
1. Originally delivered as the Presidential Address to the ISCSC, in Santo Domingo, May 1991.

2. Living in a Marxist state like the Soviet Union, Bakhtin had to be careful about his opinions on Marx. Not much on Marx by Bakhtin has been published (except for a coauthored book for which Bakhtin’s authorship is questionable). Certainly Bakhtin’s silence on Marx in almost all his other writings is evidence enough of a certain antipathy toward Marxist analytical reductionism. The same antipathy existed in the case of Freud, for Bakthin thought that to place so much emphasis on the unconscious as the motive for action was, in effect, to sidestep the question of ethical responsibility for one’s actions. Bakhtin’s “hero”—virtually from the beginning of his career—was Dostoevsky, and this because Dostoevsky embodied, in Bakhtin’s view, the deepest awareness of dialogic consciousness.

3. Morson’s essay summarizes a good many of the points he makes (with Caryl Emerson) in his recent book, Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990). This, in my view, is the best single study of Bakhtin, and I depend on it generally for my use of the Russian thinker in this essay. Other important studies of Bakhtin are Todorov’s Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogic Principle, Clark’s and Holquist’s biography, entitled Mikhail Bakhtin, and a collection of critical essays, edited by Morson and Emerson, entitled Rethinking Bakhtin.

4. It is in only the last phase of his career, when he was “rediscovered” by Russian intellectuals in the 1950’s, that one can find explicit comments—and comments only—on cross-cultural work. The best understanding of a culture, he says, for example, can be achieved by people outside the culture in question; only such people can see the culture whole (Bakhtin, Speech Genres 7). In this essay Bakhtin also takes Spengler to task for believing in “closed and finalized cultural worlds” (6), when what is needed is a concept of “open unity” for comparative cultural analysis.

5. Other categories could also be considered relevant in comparative civilizational analysis and I plan to devote a general theoretical essay to them. These categories include, for example, carnivalization, chronotope, heteroglossia, utterance, voice, prosaics, and genre. The two cat-
egories emphasized in this particular essay, however, identify two major and conflicting processes in any intercivilizational encounter.

6. The term "discovery," in use for centuries concerning the encounter between Europe and the Americas, has recently been criticized for being too imperialistic. After all, the people in the Americas knew who they were and did not need to be "discovered" in order to exist. Other terms have been suggested: Edmundo O'Gorman prefers the term "invention" (see O'Gorman's *La invención de América*), which accords with evidence on Latin documents of the time, for instance with the Latin version of the letter to Santangel ("de Insulis Indiae supra Gangem nuper inventis"). Other scholars, more recently, prefer "encounter" as a term which is more value-free than "discovery." That is true. The fact is, however, that to call what happened an "encounter" cannot minimize the fact that it led to a brutal appropriation—a "conquest"—of the New World; for Europeans of the time, the "encounter" was indeed a "discovery" of human beings who up to that point had not existed.

7. The accuracy of the diary or reconstructed log-book of Columbus has recently been thoroughly explored by David Henige in his book, *In Search of Columbus*. The issue is how disinterested a transcriber and editor of the log-book Bartolomé de Las Casas was. However, the fact that Columbus's log-book was seen through the prism of Las Casas's consciousness, and thus may be somewhat distorted by that process, makes little difference to my argument in this essay. The most accurate English translation of what is considered to be the diary or log-book of the first voyage—and the one cited here—is that by Cecil Jane, which is extracted by John H. Parry and Robert G. Keith in their "documentary history" of Latin America from the "discovery" to the early seventeenth century, entitled *New Iberian World*. "Dice aquí el Almirante que hoy y siempre de allí adelante hallaron aires temperantisimos; que era placer grande el gusto de las mananas, que no faltaba sino oir ruiseiiores. Dice él, y era el tiempo como Abril en el Andalucia" (Navarette I: 156).

8. "Tuvieron la mar como el rio de Sevilla" (Navarrete I: 165).


10. "Anduvo un poco por aquella tierra ques toda labrada, y oyó cantar el ruiseñor y otros pajaritos como los de Castilla" (Navarrete I: 223).

11. In his life of his father, *Historia del Almirante*, Hernando Colón, who seems to have his father's diary in front of him as he writes, describes this particular episode in the following way: "No tenían armas como las nuestras, ni las conocían, porque mostrándoles los cristianos una espada desnuda, la tomaban por el filo, estúpidamente, y se cortaban" (113). The key word for me here is "estúpidamente," stupidly, a word with stronger emotional connotations than "ignorance." The people's stupidity is counterbalanced by a kind of parrot-like facility in mimicking the sounds of Spanish (113).

12. "Cosas de muy poco valor con que habieron mucho placer." "Era gente muy pobre en todo. Ellos andan todos desnudos como su madre
los parió, y también las mugeres." "Ninguno vide de edad de mas de treinta aíos." "Los cabellos gruesos cuasi como sedas de cola de caballos, é cortos." "Dellos se pintan de prieto . . . y dellos de blanco, y dellos de colorado y dellos de lo que fallan." "Ellos no trae armas ni las cognocen, porque les amostre espadas y las tomaban por el filo, y se contaban con ignorancia. No tienen algún fierro . . . [y] ninguna secta" (Navarrete I: 167-68).

13. "Ellos deben ser buenos servidores . . . que veo que muy presto dicen todo lo que les decia, y creo que ligeramente se harían cristianos" (Navarrete I: 168).

14. "En estas islas fasta aqui no he hallado hombres monstruosos como muchos pensaban; más antes es toda gente de muy lindo acatamiento. . . . Así que monstruos no he hallado, ni noticia, salvo de una isla de Quairwes, la segunda a la entrada de las Yndias, que es poblada de una gente que tienen en todas las islas por muy feroces, los cuales comen carne humana. Estos tiene muchas canoas, con las cuales corren todas las islas de India y roban y toman cuanto pueden. . . . Estos son aquellos que tratan con las mugeres de Maúmín ques la primera isla, partiendo de España para las Yndias, que se falla, en la cual no hay hombre ninguno" (Sanz, Carta de Colón, 11).

15. I leave to one side questions about the authenticity of the document. Did Vespucci write it, or was it written by someone with access to his previous letter to Lorenzo de Pier Francesco de Medici? Certainly many of the same phrases are repeated, but they are expanded upon in the Mundus Novus letter, and certain topics are emphasized, especially the sexual appetites of New World women and the practice of cannibalism. Whether written by Vespucci or not, it is undeniably a document of the times and suggestive for what it reveals about the European attitudes toward the New World.

16. Relación acerca de las antiguiedades de los indios (completed circa 1498) was also the first book to be composed in the New World itself. See the comments in the introduction to a critical edition of this work by José Juan Arrom (México: Siglo XXI, 1974).

17. "De piu frequenti populi & animali habitata de la n'era Europa: o uero Asia: o uero Affrica: & ancora laere piu temperato & ameno: che in que banda altra regione de nui cognosciute" (Varnhagen 13).

18. "Gente dico mansueta e tractabile" (Varnhagen 17).


20. "Viueno secondo la natura: & epicurii piu presto dir se possano ch’ stoici" (Varnhagen 18). "Nature" here acquires the kind of value it will have in Montaigne’s essays. Montaigne is a much more committed adherent of “the natural.” It becomes for him a kind of ultimate moral category, as we shall see.


22. See Palencia-Roth, “La ley los canibales, Cartagena, y el mar Caribe en el siglo XVI.” A much longer version of this essay, written in
English, is forthcoming in *Early Images of the New World*, edited by Jerry M. Williams (University of Arizona Press).

23. “Domadores de las gentes bárbaras.” “Que Dios, Nuestro Señor, vivo y eterno, crió el cielo y la tierra y un hombre y una mujer, de quien vosotros os nosotros y todos los hombres del mundo fueron y son descendientes” (Las Casas, *Historia de las Indias* III: 26).

24. “Juzgar e gobernar a todas las gentes, cristianos, moros, judíos, gentiles y de cualquier otra secta” (III: 26).

25. “Reconocáis a la Iglesia por señora y superiora del Universo mundo” (III: 27).

26. “Vos haremos guerra por todas las partes y maneras que pudiéramos.” “Vos sujetaremos al yugo y obediencia de la Iglesia y de Sus Altezas.” “Protestamos que las muertes y daños que dello se recrecieren sea a vuestra culpa y no de Sus Altezas” (III: 27).

27. “Como si fueran unos animales sin provecho, [y que] después de muertos solamente [se quejaban] de que se les muriesen, por la falta que en las minas del oro y las otras granjerías les hacían” (Las Casas, *Historia de las Indias* II: 458).


29. The unfinalizability of the person is related also, for Bakhtín, to the unfinalizability of texts. In other words, one can never attain a definitive, final interpretation of a text; there will always be something that escapes notice or analysis and which a later interpreter or generation will discover or reinterpret. It is textual unfinalizability that keeps the practice of interpretation alive. It is dogmatic to insist on a certain interpretation being final.

30. For example, after being commanded to destroy the Indians’ original homes and to resettle them on Spanish land, the *encomenderos* were ordered to build a church in which they had to place an image of the Virgin and a bell for summoning Indians to prayer (Gibson 65). Attendance at chapel was compulsory. So, too, was religious indoctrination; further, examinations on the teachings of the faith were prescribed by law (no. 4). Other articles in the “Laws of Burgos” deal with procedures for achieving literacy among the Indians (no. 9), with instructions on confession (no. 10) and on baptism (no. 12). Still others deal with prohibitions: Indians may not dance their tribal dances (no. 14); they may not have more than one wife at a time (no. 16); they must not be ill clothed (no. 20). Some prohibitions treat the Spanish actions toward Indians: for example, Spaniards cannot employ those Indians who are not part of his *encomienda* (no. 21); nor can Spaniards legally
“beat any Indian with sticks, or whip him, or call him dog, or address him by any other than his proper name alone” (Gibson 74), which suggests, of course, that such illegal behavior was common.

31. It is Bernal Díaz del Castillo, however, who best gives the sense of wonder that the Spanish must have experienced on approaching Tenochtitlán. “When we saw that straight and level road leading to Mexico,” Bernal Díaz wrote, “we were stunned, and we said that it all seemed like enchanted stories told in the tale of Amadís, because of the great towers and cues and buildings which were set in the water and were made of stone. And some of our soldiers even asked if what they saw were not a dream, and one should not marvel that I write in this manner, for there is so much to think about in those things that I do not even know how to describe them: things never heard of, never even dreamt” (Díaz del Castillo 159). A bit later he concluded his description by stating: “Now all that has been destroyed, lost, there is nothing left (Díaz del Castillo 159). My translation. “Y desde que vimos . . . aquella calzada tan derecha y por nivel cómo iba a México, nos quedamos admirados, y decíamos que parecía a los cosas de encantamiento que cuentan en el libro de Amadís, por las grandes torres y cues y edificios que tenían dentro en el agua, y todos de calicanto, y no es de maravillar que yo escriba aquí de esta manera, porque hay mucho que ponderar en ello que no sé como lo cuente: ver cosas nunca oídas, ni aun soñadas, como veíamos.” “Ahora todo está por el suelo, perdido, que no hay cosa.” We have seen that sense of wonder at New World reality before. Columbus experienced it (or wrote about experiencing it), first in response to the beauty and innocence of the people, and then in response to the abundant natural harbors and fertile lands he encountered.

32. “La cual ciudad . . . es muy mayor que Granada y muy más fuerte y de tan buenos edificios y de mucha más gente que Granada tenia al tiempo que se ganó, y muy mejor abastecida de las cosas de la tierra” (Cortés, Cartas 41).

33. “Y yo les comencé a hacer mis requerimientos en forma, con las lenguas que conmigo llevaba, por ante escribano. Y cuando más me paraba a los amonestar y requerir con la paz, tanto más prisa nos daban, ofendiéndonos cuanto ellos podían; y viendo que no aprovechaban requerimientos ni protestaciones, comenzamos a nos defender como podíamos” (Cortés, Cartas 37).

34. Cortés here overlooked, of course, the Spaniards’ technological superiority in armor, weapons, and horses.

35. Bernal Díaz del Castillo places that conversation in the evening, not during the first formal encounter. In Díaz del Castillo’s account, Cortés is more conciliatory and polite, going so far as to praise Montezuma for being such a “great prince” (“gran señor”) that the Emperor himself had sent Cortés to Tenochtitlán to visit him (Díaz del Castillo 163).

36. “Y pues estáis en vuestra naturaleza y en vuestra casa” (Cortés, Cartas 52).
37. "... satisfaciendo a aquello que me pareció que convenía, en especial en hacerle creer que vuestra majestad era a quien ellos esperaban" (Cortés, Cartas 52).


39. In a sense, in the forum in which the debate took place (The School of Theology in Valladolid), the debate's outcome was almost predetermined. The beneficent view of the Indian had received intermittent but powerful support for the previous fifty years, particularly from the papacy. In 1537, for instance, Pope Paul III issued a bull (Sublimis Deus Sic Dilexit) which proclaimed the essential humanity of all Indians. Being "men," they had to be treated accordingly. (See Gibson 104-5) In a series of books notable for their scholarship as well as for their benevolent view of the Spanish enterprise, Lewis Hanke has studied the question of "justice" in the New World. These books are, in order of their publication, The Spanish Struggle for Justice in the Conquest of America, Aristotle and the American Indians, All Mankind is One.

40. "Comme de vray il semble que nous n'avons autre [mire] de la verité et de la raison que l'exemple et idee des opinions et usances du pais où nous sommes. La est toujours la parfaict religion, la parfaict police, perfect et accomply usage de toutes choses" Montaigne, Oeuvres complètes II: 242).

41. The sense of the French is missing from the translation. The adjective describing both men and fruits in the French is "sauvage" or savage, which much more accurately suggests the contrast between civilized and non-civilized that Montaigne was trying to emphasize.

42. "Ils sont sauvages, de mesmes que nous appelions sauvages les fruicts que nature, de soy et de son progres ordinaire, a produicts: là où, à la verité, ce sont ceux que nous avons alterez par nostre artifice et detournez de l'ordre commun, que nous devrions appeller plutost sauvages" (Montaigne, Oeuvres complètes II: 242-43).

43. "Ces nations me semblent donq ainsi barbares, pour avoir receu fort peu de fagon de l'esprit humain, et estre encore fort voisines de leur naifvete originelle. Les loix naturelles leur commandent encores, fort peu abastardies par les nostres" (Montaigne, Oeuvres complètes II: 244).

44. "Je ne suis pas marry que nous remarquons l'horreur barbaresque qu'il y a en une telle action [cannibalism], mais ouy bien dequoy, jugeans bien de leur fautes, nous soyons si aveuglez aux nostres. Je pense qu'il y a plus de barbarie à manger un homme vivant qu'à le manger mort, à dechirer, par tourmens et par geenes, un corps encore plein de sentiment, le fair rostir par le menu, le fair mordre et meurtrir aux chiens et aux porceaux (comme nous l'avons, non seulement lee, mais veu de fresche memoire ...) que de le rostir et manger apres qu'il est trespassé" (Montaigne, Oeuvres complètes II: 255).

45. "Nous, qui les surpassons en toute sorte de barbarie" (II: 254).
46. "Se soubsmissent à obeyr à un enfant, et qu’on ne choisissoit plus tost quelqu’un d’entr’eux pour commander" (II: 264).

47. "... de voir arriver si inopinément des gens barbus, divers en langage, religion, en forme et en contenance, d’un endroit du monde si esloigné et où ils n’avoient jamais imaginé qu’il y eust habitation quelconque, montez sur des grands monstres incogneus, contre ceux qui n’avoient non seulement jamais veu de cheval, mais beste quelconque duicté à porter es soutenir homme ny autre charge; garnis d’une peau luysante et dure et d’une arme trenchante et resplendissante" (Montaigne, Oeuvres complètes V: 275-76).

48. Among the “ethnographers” who were sympathetic may be counted Las Casas in the Apologética historia sumaria (not published until 1909), José de Acosta in the influential Historia natural y moral de las Indias (1590), and Bernardino de Sahagún in his massive Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España (1547-62). Despite their evident sympathy, however, not one of these men—missionaries all—considered the Indian to be on an equal footing with the European. For example, even Las Casas finally concluded toward the end of the Apologética historia sumaria that the Indians were barbarians because they were not Christian and that in order to lose their barbarism they had to convert. And Sahagún, in the prologue to the 12th book of his Historia general, which deals with the conquest of Mexico, stated that the first of many “miracles” in this campaign was that granted by “the Lord God” to Cortés and his soldiers in the battle against the Tlascaltecas, a battle which Sahagún likened to that waged by Joshua in conquering the promised land. This rhetoric is typical. Anthony Pagden, in The Fall of Natural Man, has analyzed the intricacies of 16th-century ethnography.

49. I leave to one side the cartographical traditions of Arabic and Chinese cultures, both of which had their own traditions of representing the entire known world with different strategies of centering, marginalization, and of allegorical typologizing through both word and image. They are not relevant to a discussion of the European mapping of the New World.

50. When another part of the world was mentioned—and this was rare—it was usually referred to either as “terra incognita” (and no special land mass was designated by the term) or “antipodes.”

51. Carta Marina 1516, by Martin Waldseemüller. See also Carlos Sanz, El nombre América.

52. The allegorization of the New World was a popular subject in 16th-century iconography. In The New Golden Land, Hugh Honour has devoted a chapter to the topic (84-117).

53. The savagery of New World people is the message of the caption beneath the woodcut. The text is taken from the German translation of Vespucci’s Mundus Novus letter, discussed earlier in this essay, and describes the customs of these cannibals.