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The Reception of Autos-de-Fe in 18th Century New Spain: Image, Text and Practice

Emmanuel Ortega

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**THE RECEPTION OF AUTOS-DE-FÉ IN 18TH CENTURY
NEW SPAIN: IMAGE, TEXT AND PRACTICE**

BY

EMMANUEL ORTEGA

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**Master of Arts
Art History**

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

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B.A., Art History, University of Nevada Las Vegas 2005

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ABSTRACT

In 18th century New Spain, autos-de-fé were publicly performed as a way to openly confront the sins of heretics and to announce their penance. Paintings of these events are among the rarest scenes ever depicted on both sides of the Atlantic. Paintings, such as *Un auto de fè en el pueblo de San Bartolomé Otzolotepec* ca.1716, emphasize the impressive display of power enacted by the inquisition through autos-de-fé. However, they downplay the presence of the indigenous spectator-participant in lieu of the organizers and elite invitees. In terms of content, however, this painting represents a unique example of auto images since its subject matter centers around the judging of Natives. Furthermore, in this thesis, I examine autos-de-fé in New Spain by analyzing its performance through pictorial and written accounts as well as by studying the space in which autos took place. Besides providing a new interpretation of the event this interpretation aims to produce a deeper understanding of auto-de-fé images in general.

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Anonymous.



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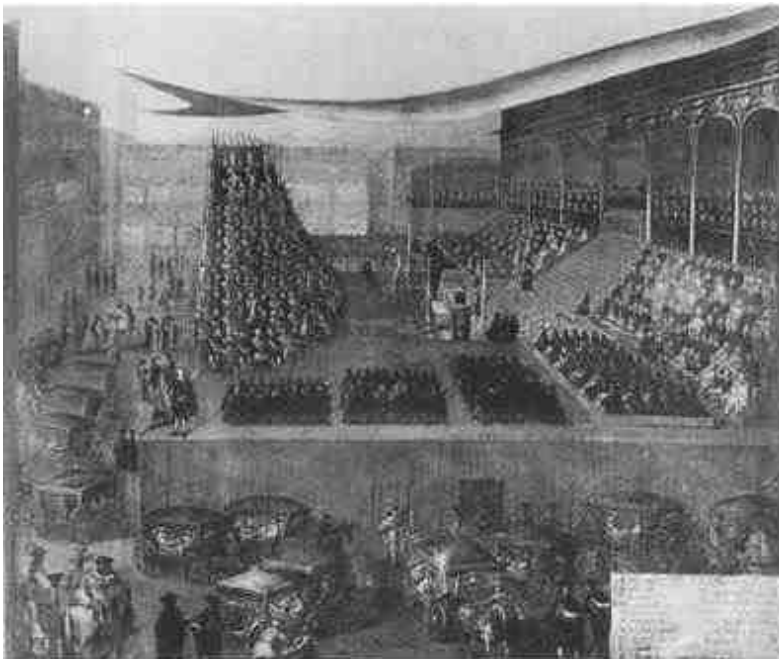


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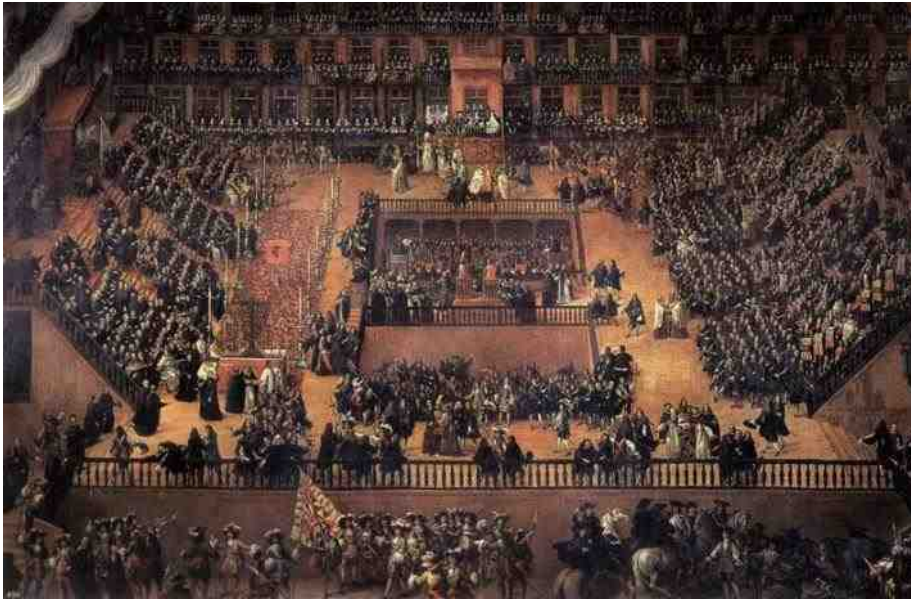
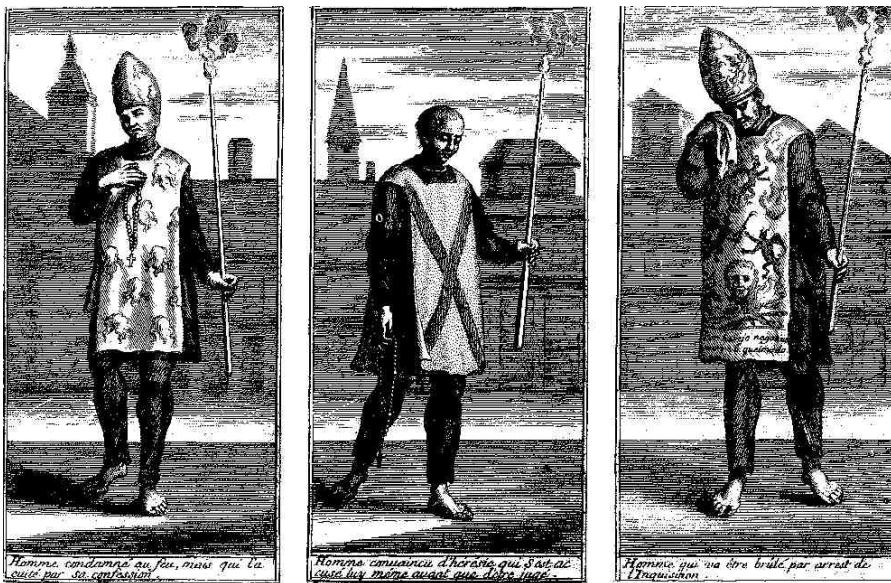


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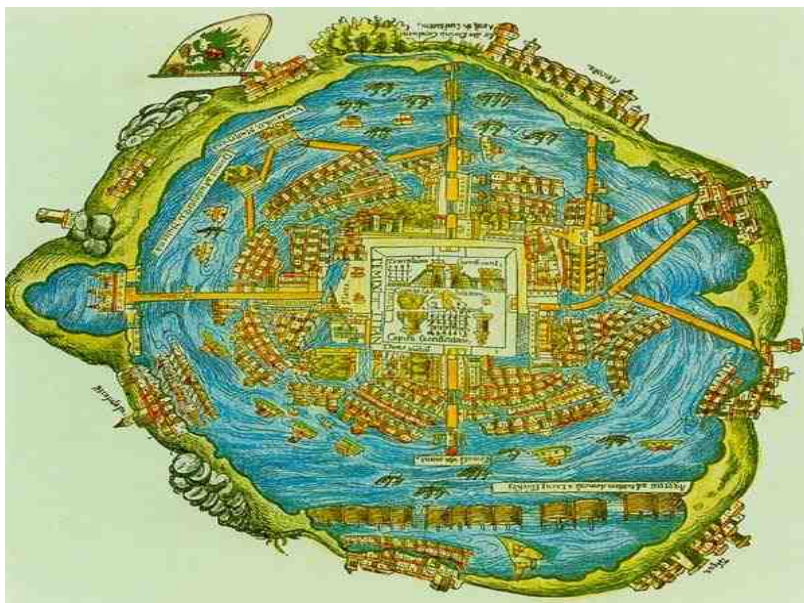


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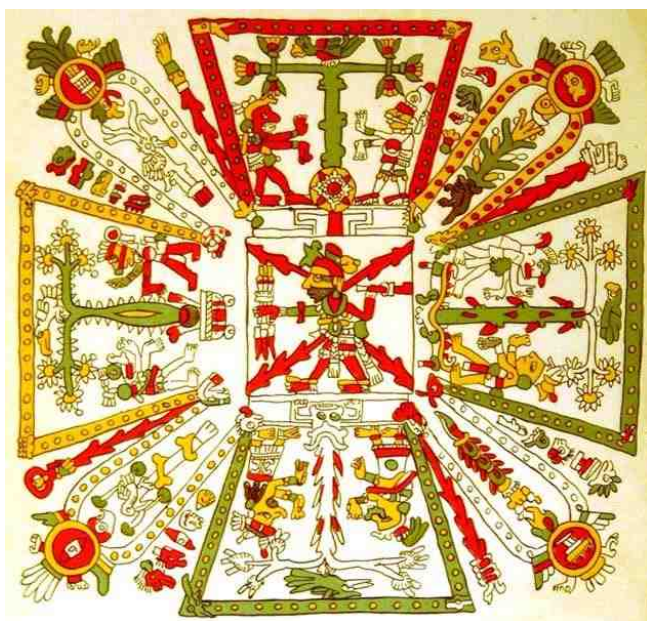


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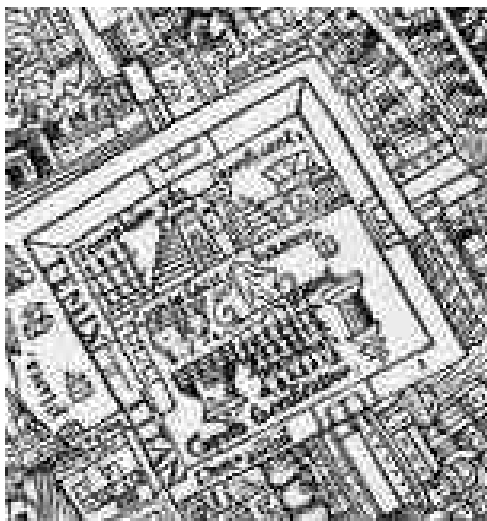


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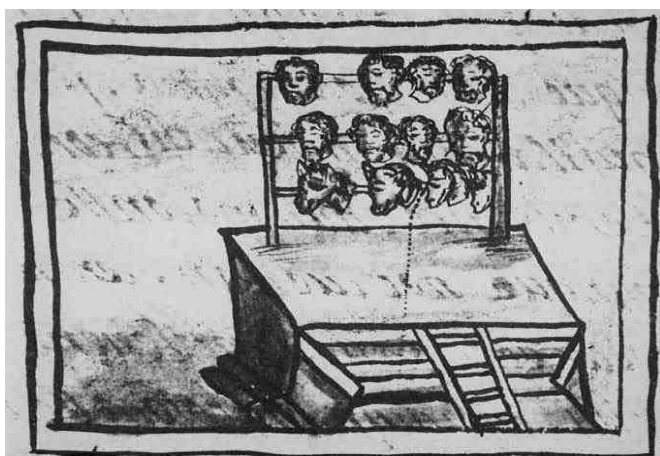


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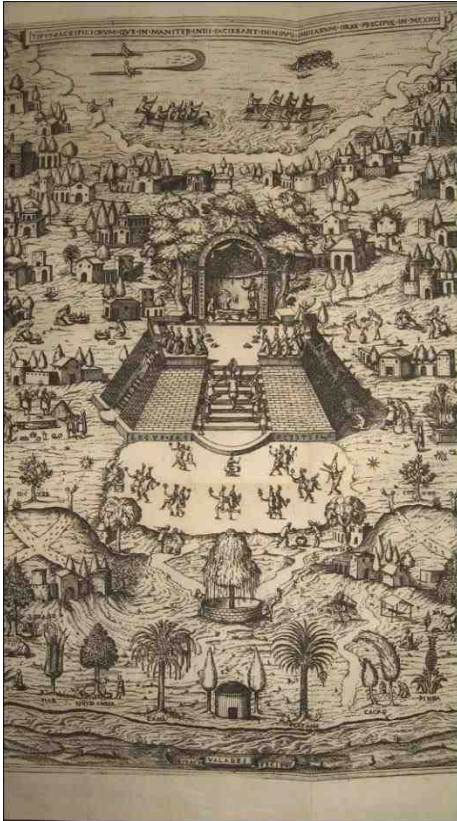


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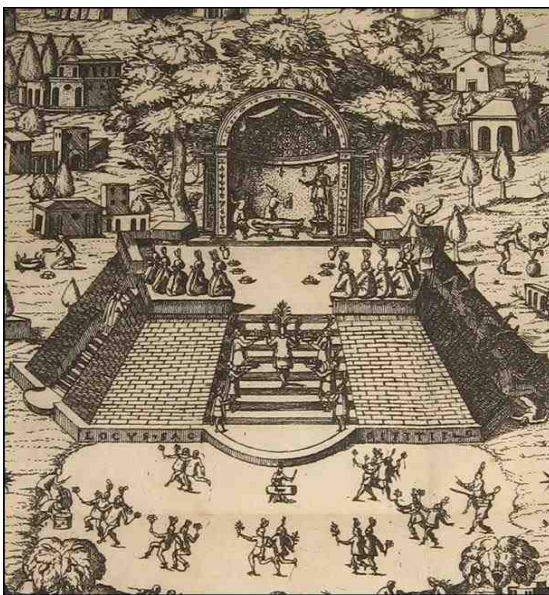


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Introduction

Issues and Questions

In 18th century New Spain, autos-de-fé were publicly performed as a way to openly confront the sins of heretics and to announce their penance. Paintings of these events are among the rarest scenes ever depicted on both sides of the Atlantic. According to the extant evidence on Spanish commissions, paintings depicting the inquisitorial ceremony were not intended to be viewed by everybody; institutional elites and perhaps those with access to the halls of the inquisitional palaces were the primary viewers of such images. Despite the paucity of images, many written records have survived that describe the nature of autos-de-fé in both Spain and the territories of New Spain. These narratives, which include details, such as the process of organizing an auto to the execution of the event, often differ in the type of information presented in the pictorial accounts. Furthermore, existing paintings of these performances do not seem to coincide with the stated intentions of autos-de-fé as described by the available written accounts.

The main purpose of an auto-de-fé was to restate the supremacy of the Church and the Crown. The participation of segments of the local populace as spectator-participants during such performances was central. Paintings, such as *Un auto de fè en el pueblo de San Bartolomé Oztolotepec ca.1716* (Fig.1), currently in El Museo Nacional de Arte de México, emphasize the impressive display of power enacted by the inquisition through autos-de-fé. However, they downplay the presence of the indigenous spectator-participant in lieu of the organizers and elite invitees. Significantly, instead of identifying the individual to be executed, auto-de-fé paintings highlight the members of the Church and the nobility. The disjuncture created by the differences between written and pictorial

accounts can be explained by contextualizing the formal aspects of the painted images with historical information. One must keep in mind that the pictorial and written accounts provided different, while not opposing information regarding the details of autos. In light of the information conveyed in the images, their intended reception becomes a central issue. For who were these paintings created and that was their main function?

In this thesis, I examine autos-de-fé in New Spain by analyzing its performance through pictorial and written accounts as well as by studying the space in which autos took place. Besides providing a new interpretation of the event this interpretation aims to produce a deeper understanding of auto-de-fé images in general. The visual culture that relates to the practice of autos-de-fé can be traced to before the conquest of Mexico and can be extended to include the years of the early 20th-century. Instead of creating a purely formal analysis of such imagery, I intend to examine one image as a preliminary step for an additional art historical analysis of the broader subject. *Un Auto en el Pueblo de San Bartolome Otzolotepec* is exemplary since it contains all of the formal characteristics that define auto-de-fé images.¹ In terms of content, however, this painting represents a unique example of auto images since its subject matter centers around the judging of Natives. The marginalized members of this group were not only judged under a different jurisdiction within the Inquisition, but their presence was completely erased from any account that deals with autos-de-fé or the history of the Novohispanic Inquisition. As the thesis progresses beyond the formal analysis of auto-de-fé images, it will become clear how SBO represents the point of departure for all the problems presented. SBO

elicited all the questions proposed in this thesis. It motivated question of pictorial and performance reception, which will be furthered in my project by exploring the differences and similarities between SBO and other Spanish examples. Additionally, by looking at each and one of the pictorial details of SBO, I was motivated to question issues dealing with Natives and their role in the procedures of the Novohispanic Inquisition.

The depiction of Natives in Colonial Latin American art has become the object of many anthropological and historical studies, but few art historical ones. Besides *casta* paintings that depict Natives and their derivations in a variety of domestic and labor modes of representation, few are the genres of Latin American colonial art in which the Native is the center of depiction.² Moreover, due to the under investigated nature of Natives within colonial art historical studies, the assessment of SBO presents a challenge that must be undertaken with a different perspective. Instead of allowing the work's formal aspects to delineate the final results of my thesis, I will expand on those details in order to better understand the colonial auto as it was documented and may have happened.

II. Main Object of Study: Formal and Contextual Analysis

Un auto de fe en el pueblo de San Bartolomé Otzolotepec

Instead of studying SBO in terms of style or art historical period, I will limit my preliminary analysis to a formalist approach. The artistic styles or trends in which much of colonial pictorial art is viewed represent artistic categories that tend to get compared or equated with European movements. The unique unstudied genre of Auto-de-fé images will not allow such comparisons due to the lack of material and formal studies and the

¹ I will refer to Un auto de fe en el Pueblo de San Bartolome Otzolotepec as SBO.

² With the exception of counted portraits and religious images.

specific purpose it may have served within the Inquisition.³ The purpose of my formalist approach is to understand how SBO can be tied to the tradition of auto images of Spain and to raise questions proposed earlier in this introduction. Before breaking-down the painting into such details, it is important to study the few preceding images created between 15th and 17th century Spain. Such images may have served as models for SBO and may have had an impact in its overall aesthetics. Although it is unclear how auto images cross the Atlantic, their possible distribution through inquisitorial prints may help explain its American viewership.

Un auto de fè en el pueblo de San Bartolomé Otzolotepec has come to us with no information other than the one provided by its text. According to the General guide of The Museo Nacional de Arte de México (MUNAL), this event was preceded by the ecclesiastic judge which is indicated by the number two in the top left of the SBO. The museum catalogue also suggests that the judge could have been the “*comitente*” or patron of this work. However, after careful analysis I have concluded that one of the probable patrons was Juan Ignacio María de Castorena Ursúa Goyeneche y Villarreal, who is considered the first journalist in modern Mexican history for the creation of one of the first Mexican news paper; *La Gaceta Mexicana*.⁴ Looking at other auto-de-fé paintings outside of New Spain may also help us understand the reasons behind the artistic

³ The main purpose of Spanish paintings of auto-de-fé has been studied by a few authors. They all agree that it may have served as a document to illustrate the expansion of the Inquisition’s power outside Madrid. Due to some of the formal similarities between the Spanish examples and SBO its use as a document becomes a plausible explanation. The use of paintings as court documents will be mentioned when dealing with the sponsorship and provenance of SBO.

⁴ Juan Ignacio Maria de Castorena had a doctorate in theology and served as ordinary inquisitor in the beginning of the 18th century. Very little information on his role as inquisitor was found due to the fact that most information was related solely to his role as the first journalist of Mexico

commission of SBO. Pictorial accounts of autos-de-fé include engravings and paintings that depict different moments in the execution of such ceremonies.

Three other paintings of autos-de-fé will be taken into consideration as a base for the pictorial elements found in SBO. The three paintings chosen constitute the most significant examples of auto-de-fé paintings created in Spain. Although it is almost certain that many other images were created, these three examples constitute perhaps the only oils that have been made public since the 19th century. One of the most complete paintings of an auto-de-fé was created by Pedro Berruguete in the late fifteenth-century. *St. Dominic Conducting an Auto de fé* (1495) depicts different episodes of the ceremony: the sentence, the abjuration, and the punishments. Created by Francisco Herrera, *Auto de fé en la Plaza de San Francisco* (1660) represents a later rendition of this apparently small genre of painting. Twenty years after the creation of Herrera's work, Francisco Rizi created what is perhaps the most recognized painting of an auto-de-fé. Located in El Museo del Prado in Madrid, *Auto de Fé en la Plaza Mayor* celebrates an auto of June 30, 1680. It is important to note that auto-de-fé images that follow the formalistic patterns that will be analyzed in the last three paintings are scarce. On the other hand, images that simply relate to autos-de-fé are much more abundant. SBO, although considered a unique image mainly due to the participation of Natives in an inquisitorial event, it follows the formal language found in the three Spanish paintings already discussed.

If we eliminate the text, the composition of *Un auto de fè en el pueblo de San Bartolomé Otzolotepec* can be interpreted according to the viewer's eye. In other words, if the viewer allows his/her eye to follow this specific work of art, the weight usually falls in the center where four heretics rise above the present crowd. Without the text, the

prisoners become principal characters, while inquisitorial members vanish to the sides and to the background of the composition. The text in the upper left directly indicates the physical placement of what must be the most honorable invitees. The text in the lower part describes the event and announces the title of some of the most important guests, such as the vicar judge who presided over this important event. The text in the bottom of the picture space reads as follows:

Auto de fe celebrated in the paroquial church of S. Bartolome Oztolotepec in the day of February the 23rd in the year of 1716 by virtue of the decree of Mr. Don Juan Ignacio of Castorena and Usuria chaplain in honor of its majesty and superedicador professor of the sacred writings in the Universidad Real Calificadora of the holy offices of the inquisition. Canonic of this sacred catholic church, Provisory judge and general vicar of the naturals of this archbishopric. By his grace and ___ Mr. ___D. Fray Joseph of Lanciego and Aguilar Archbishop of Mexico and the council of its majesty. Presided by by the B.D. Nicholas Lopez Xardon, priest__by its majesty of given party ecclesiastic judge in chief and commissary of the office of this kingdom.

And the top left inscription reads as follows:

- 1 Altar and Priest that conducted the mass.⁵
- 2 The site of Sir Ecclesiastic Judge.⁶
- 3 el sitio de el señor alcalde mayor.
4. Mayor's Assistant and notaries of the Arcobispado.
5. The priests and ministers that assisted.
6. The Magistrate of Toluca.
7. The Governors of such party.
- 8 The accused punished.⁷

⁵ This has been identified as Nicolas Lopez Xardon whose participation in the construction of the Church where SBO took place is mentioned in chapter 3.

⁶ This was perhaps the site of Joseph Lanciego Aguilar who was the General Vicar Provisory of the Natives of the region of Toluca.

⁷ The Original text of SBO reads as follows: Auto de fe celebrado en la iglesia paroquial de S. Bartolome Osolotepec el dia 23 de febrero de el año 1716 en virtud de lo proveido por el señor Don Juan Ygnasio de Castorena y Ursua capellán de honor de su magestad y superedicador catedraico de sagrada escritura en la real universidad calificadora de el santo oficio ed la inquisición. Canonico de esta Sagrada Iglesia católica Jues Provisor y vicario general de los naturales de este arzobispado Por el Ilustrisimo y R__mo S. M__ de

There are empty bleachers on the middle right of the picture; these may have belonged to the victims on the stage. Next to the empty bleachers, we see other victims identified by *sambornitos* (canonical robes worn by prisoners in autos-de-fé) as well. Surrounding the stage, we see a variety of people attending the religious theater of power. For example, there are women on the left of the bleacher; other spectators with their back to us can be distinguished by their fashionable French clothing. The presence of Native spectators can be spotted in and outside of the auto. The two spectators who look at each other below the two main victims on the right are of darker skin. The details of the faces and the skin colors of all the spectators are hard to distinguish since the closer they are to the stage, the less specific details become. That is not to say that there were only local elite members and Natives witnessing the event. Given the weight and spectacle of the auto, it is not hard to imagine that such an important public performance was attended by people from different levels of society, as well as by people from other towns.

The space at the edges of the central scene frames other activities that do not necessarily correspond to the main event. For example, there is a figure on the bottom right side that, judging by his height, may have been a young man or child. The child appears unimpressed by the activities before him. This attitude can also be observed by the characters surrounding the autos in both *Auto de fé en la Plaza de San Francisco* and *Auto de Fé en la Plaza Mayor*. Instead, he spends his time playing with a dog. Similarly, one can spot in the bottom left of the picture what appears to be a pair of men who seem

frai Joseph de Lanciego y Aguilar arsovispo de Mexico de le Consejo de su magestad Presidido por el B D. Nicolas Lopes Xardon Cura__Por su Magestad de dicho partido Juez eclesiástico incapite y comisario del ofisio de este reyno.. 1 Altar y sacerdote que dirige la misa. 2 el sitial del Senor Jues eclesiástico. 3 el sitial de el señor alcalde mallor.4 el alguasil mallor y notarios del Arcobi. 5 Los Curas y ministros que Asistieron. 6 El corexidor de Toluca. 7 los gobernadores de dicho partido8 los reos que penitenciaron.

to be engaged in a playful action that is hard to discern. We can also identify two groups of women behind each set of benches. The two groups of seated women are placed in the middle of the picture plane, outside of the action, and on each side of the composition. What they are doing is uncertain, but one can deduce by the color of their skin and their clothing that they are Native. I must point out that due to the lack of any documentation of SBO, the veracity of the auto and the activities surrounding is difficult to corroborate. This piece will not be viewed as a historical document in which to base my conclusions. Instead, SBO represents a very specific view of an auto whose content may have been an interpretation based on its patron's requirements. The patronage is assumed to be the offices of the Inquisition. This type of patronage is assumed since according to Victoria Gonzalez Caldas, the paintings of autos produced in Spain were Inquisitorial commissions for the main Palace in Madrid. The auto illustrated in SBO, and the activities surrounding it, will inform historical and reception issues regarding Natives in autos-de-fé in central New Spain.⁸ SBO exemplifies the formal language of what can be defined as a distinctive genre of painting in spite of the small number of examples of auto paintings that exist in both sides of the Atlantic.

Coming back to the basic elements of the picture, we can see the similarities between the paintings previously discussed. One detail which is consistent in all three compositions are the activities outside the staging areas that take place as the ceremony unfolds in the center of each image. Rizi's composition from Madrid depicts people leaving their

⁸ It is important to note that Natives will be treated in the general sense of the word. In other words, the Native reception within autos, although may have been similar in different areas of New Spain, most likely changed according to a list of influential factors. The Natives in SBO and their spectatorship may not be

benches, walking around, and participating in several social activities. Attention to detail outside the main ceremony leaves out any trace of the presence of non-privileged spectators, which at the end, defeats one of the purposes of autos-de-fé: to infiltrate ordinary people's minds with fear through a sense of inquisitorial authority and violence. Similarly, Herrera depicts Spanish women holding their fans and engaged in conversations while prisoners are being read their death sentences. And finally, as mentioned before, the three paintings correspond in their overall composition by using devices, such as aerial perspectives, and the lack of attention to the victims as main character in the portrayed event. Ultimately, the way prisoners are depicted represents the most significant difference between written records and pictorial accounts of autos-de-fé.

III. Literature Review

Bethencourt, Francisco. "The Auto de Fé: Ritual and Imagery." *Journal of the Warburg and Courland Institutes* 55 (1992): 155-168.

This is perhaps the only existing comprehensive source for the formal and iconographical analysis of autos-de-fé in the Spanish tradition. Considering the fact that the Inquisition of New Spain was modeled after the Inquisition of Spain it is not hard to imagine that the similarities found in auto-de-fé illustrations from Spain coincide with those created in New Spain. Bethencourt begins his analysis of the event by describing autos as public spectacles in which all levels of society participated. His main argument is that the images recorded served two main purposes: one, auto images illustrate historical moments and two, reveal inconsistencies between them and the written records. The first purpose is the idea that the illustration (three of which are oils) reflect the different

exemplars of all the Natives from all the different areas of New Spain. Instead, for the purpose of this

periods of the Inquisition in New Spain. Bethencourt points out how the last years of the fifteenth-century represent the most violent phase of the Spanish Inquisition. *St. Dominic Conducting an Auto de fé*, a painting considered to be the first of this rare genre, legitimizes this violent phase by referencing the inquisitorial activity of St. Dominic.⁹ Later autos become much more public as depicted in paintings like *Auto de fé en la Plaza de San Francisco* of 1660 and *Auto de Fé en la Plaza Mayor* of 1666.

The last and most important argument on the topic of the Novohispanic images studied is the inconsistency that exists between written and pictorially depicted records. Bethencourt argues how a painter of an auto-de-fé does not portray the suffering, anxiety or repentance of the prisoner to avoid creating a martyr out of them. In fact, all the images ichnographically examined in my thesis reinforce this point. In other words, all the images frame a *magisterial gaze* where the main subject within the panorama, i.e. the heretic, is ignored in favor of a view of the elaborated stage in which the auto took place.

Cañeque, Alejandro. "Theater of Power: Writing and Representing the Auto de Fé in Colonial México." *The Americas*, Vol. 52, 3 (1996): 321-343

Alejandro Cañeque starts his essay by explaining in detail the procession that preceded the Spanish auto of 1659. This narrative is later expanded by explaining the important role of the viewers who in the process of executing an auto-de-fé became spectator-participants. The viewers thus gain an essential role since autos were targeted to the general public. The elaborated nature of such spectacles would have been rendered unnecessary without the presence of spectator-participants. Cañeque explains the

thesis, the Natives in SBO will only be exemplars to the Natives in Central México.

⁹Francisco Bethencourt, "The Auto de Fé: Ritual and Imagery," *Journal of the Warburg and Courland Institutes* No. 55 (1992): 163

different stages of an auto-de-fé acknowledging always the presence of spectator-participants. Cañeque's description provides insight into the complexity of these events. For example, he explains, regarding an auto that took place in Mexico City in 1659, how the entire process started during the early hours of the morning, and was carried to the late hours of the night. The process of a public auto gradually unfolded, beginning with the procession, and culminating with the declaration of the sins of sometimes hundreds of accused heretics.

“Theater of Power” investigates ideas of imperial legitimization and racial differentiations concerning autos-de-fé. Although not mentioned in the article, the racial differentiations informing the politics of the Novohispanic Inquisition mainly involve the triangle formed by Peninsulares (the privileged class of the white Iberian Peninsula), Jews, and Natives¹⁰. The dynamics between Jews and Peninsulares before and after the conquest will help to clarify the way in which Natives were treated inside the Inquisition. The inclusion of Jewish people and their contrast with American Natives is necessary given the intense inquisitorial activity against Jews in Spain and New Spain. Also, a further study is necessary since the inquisition was precisely created to punish Jews practices in Spain. Furthermore, the fact that Natives were treated under a separate inquisitorial jurisdiction limits the amount of documentation available. This is due to the fact that most of the documentation pertaining Inquisition victims in both Spain and New Spain in most part deals with Jewish victims. Moreover, instead of creating anthropological cases of different races in New Spain and their relations around autos-de-

¹⁰ The races in New Spain extended to dozens of categories, but in the case of the trials of the Inquisition these three racial categories become the dominant the center of accusation.

fé, I would use the case of the auto of 1649 in which, a great majority of the prisoners were of Jewish descent.

Cañeque uses the biblical narrative of the last judgment to further explore the iconography of the auto-de-fé as a public spectacle. In this case, the article also recognizes the contributions of Maureen Flynn. Cañeque adds how the audience was provided with many religious symbols to help them recognize some of the sins the prisoners allegedly committed. The *sambornito* (canonical robe used by the victims) was decorated with flames and a series of details that related to the sins committed providing an important symbol for the spectator's interpretation.¹¹

This article is one of the few sources where the viewer's important presence is fully acknowledged. Cañeque argues that the presence of people in such cruel spectacles was regarded as a form of recreation, which was part of many festivals that took place during the middle years of the reign of Spain over the American territories.¹² This article addresses problems that arose regarding the audience's participation and the psychological reasoning behind their presence during public autos. Ultimately, the psychological consequences that these acts had over the city's population and their behavior are of equal importance. Although Cañeque gives enough evidence to support his argument, he does not offer an explanation to understand the psychological drives and presence of the general public to these types of events. This is precisely one of the questions I intend to address in my thesis.

¹¹ Cañeque, "Theatre of Power: writing and representing the Auto de fé in colonial México," *The Americas*, Vol 52, No. 3 (1996): 326-331

¹² Cañeque, "Theatre of Power: writing and representing the Auto de fé in colonial México," *The Americas*, Vol 52, No. 3 (1996): 330

Cañeque addresses the importance of written records describing them as written equivalents of pictorial icons in view of the fact that the, “subject matter familiar to the reader is presented in quickly recognizable subtexts and readily identifiable forms of discourse.”¹³ Indeed, the information provided by all the *relaciones* describing autos-de-fé is very important and include a series of key facts that will help to re-construct the specific details of these events. The problem with this comparison is that the only pictorial records that exist do not necessarily correspond to written records. The differences between the *relaciones* and the images of autos are significant. Such variations include the detailed trials that provide substantial information on the victim and his/her alleged sins. Written details, such as their names and religious beliefs, allow the reader to contextualize the prisoner’s individuality. In contrast, the paintings, while recognizing the presence of some of the most privileged spectators, they never individualize the victims.

Flynn, Maureen. “Mimesis of the Last Judgment: The Spanish Auto de fé.” *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 22, 2(1991): 281-297.

This essay presents a semiotic approach to the study of autos-de-fé. The main intention of the author is to demonstrate how autos were filled with Catholic iconography, specifically pertaining to the Last Judgment. This is of particular interest in my thesis due to the detailed analysis provided, which helps me reconstruct autos as public performances in which meaning was to be deciphered by spectators. Thus, autos become a staged event where in some form, the Bible served as a script to be followed by the organizers. The organizers could almost be compared to theatre directors in the way they

¹³ Cañeque, “Theatre of Power: writing and representing the Auto de fé in colonial México,” *The Americas*,

follow and conduct stage guidelines in any given play. Considering that my thesis will not be limited to investigating autos as a form of pictorial representation alone, “Mimesis of the Last Judgment” consequently becomes a very useful source to investigate the Novohispanic auto as an institutional public performance.

Taking into consideration the fact that Flynn uses the Spanish auto as the main source for her analysis, it is not hard to come to the conclusion that most of the iconography expressed in this essay would in turn have validity when the Novohispanic autos are explored. Her description of the procession that preceded the event corresponds to the sources that explore autos in New Spain and in Mexico City, in particular.¹⁴ For example, when prisoners were pardoned, they were seated at the right side of the inquisitor, while others convicted, were seated to the left. This tradition follows Mathew’s account in where the sheep, who were to receive eternal life, sat at the right of the Lord while the condemned goats sat to the left.¹⁵ This type of arrangement is demonstrated in all the illustrations and paintings I am studying.

Flynn argues that these types of events were among the most psychologically transformative spectacles during the presence of the Inquisition in Spain. The experience of publicly exposing your sins created a sense of guilt in the spectators. The author briefly mentions ideas of psychoanalysis, but unlike Flynn, my approach concentrates much more on a very particular viewer; the Natives of central New Spain.¹⁶ Nonetheless,

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¹⁴ Authors such as Francisco Bocanegra, Alejandro Cañeque, have similar accounts of autos as the ones described by Maureen Flynn.

¹⁵ Maureen Flynn, “Mimesis of the Last Judgment: The Spanish Auto de fé.” *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 22, no. 2 (1991): 288

¹⁶ Maureen Flynn, “Mimesis of the Last Judgment: The Spanish Auto de fé.” *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 22, no. 2 (1991): 286

ideas of the collective super-ego and their ultimate transformation during autos are briefly addressed in “Mimesis of the Last Judgment.”

Finally, Flynn supports her connection to Last Judgment iconography by naming several punishments presented in the apocalypse of St. Peter. The punishments described may not pertain to my analysis of the Natives involving *Un Auto de fé en el Pueblo de San Bartolome Otzolotepec*; nonetheless, they will be useful when comparing the case of Natives with other victims of the Inquisition. The punishments were also examined in terms of the reaction of the spectators. Flynn argues that fear was part of Medieval and Counter-Reformation Spanish societies and those autos were a manifestation of the horrific punishments that awaited sinners in hell.¹⁷ These types of arguments form the basis of my thesis wherein I discern ideas of fear, guilt, and punishment.¹⁸

Blaine Carreon, Emilie. “Tzompantli, Horca y Picota; sacrificio o pena capital”
Instituto de Investigaciones estéticas, UNAM, vol. XXVIII, núm. 88 (2006): 5-52

Tzompantli, Horca y Picota; sacrificio o pena capital helps create a historiography of the space of autos-de-fé in New Spain, more specifically, in what today encompasses the territory of the Valley of Mexico City. In other words, the space used for the development of autos-de-fé was not invented purely out of the imagination of the Peninsular. The plazas, parks, and streets where these performances took place were strategically thought-out and their importance is more palpable thanks to Blain’s essay. Emilie Carreón Blain explains in detail what he calls the space-of-death, before and after

¹⁷ Maureen Flynn, “Mimesis of the Last Judgment: The Spanish Auto de fé.” *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 22, no. 2 (1991): 296

¹⁸ I am aware that fear and public performance has a very long precedent in both sides of the Atlantic. Although it will not be elaborated in detail, a brief history of the topic will be mentioned in the chapter dealing with psychoanalysis.

the conquest of México. Blain understands that in both contexts, the ultimate goal of public death had very a different purpose. At the same time, he argues that both spaces were developed in similar ways. In the case of the Aztecs, public sacrifice contained religious and ritualistic meanings while the Spanish sought to re-assure their supremacy through such public displays. Nonetheless, both examples of public displays of death have a hegemonic agenda of control over the population. In some cases, the Spanish space-of-death, or auto-de-fé, found its culmination through the prisoner's flagellation, killing, burning or hanging.

This essay mostly represents the basis for one entire chapter. The importance of the viewer begins to take shape in these pages. In this chapter, the historiography of autos-de-fé in New Spain would be developed, from its meaning as a space-of-death before and after the conquest, to the plazas where autos took place during the 1700s. The purpose of this historiographic study is to understand some of the reasons behind the spaces chosen for the enactment of autos-de-fé. Although public plazas were the most likely of public spaces due to their centrality in civil colonial life, a more precise study is necessary in order to understand its history. I also further theorize the meanings that those spaces had in the memory of many spectators-participants.

Although Blaine may limit a historiography of the space-of-death to only the immediate years before and after the conquest, it is important to note how he creates this history through images. I touch upon these images, which directly relate to my central image (*Un Auto de Fe en el Pueblo de San Bartolome Otzolotepec*); most importantly, I use other illustrations such as one taken from Diego de Valadés' *Retorica Christiana*. In

my study of Valadés' images, their main role consists in their continuation on the development of the historiography that Blain begins in his essay but abandons short after the conquest. Furthermore, Valadés' image creates a bridge between those years examined by Blaine, and the 17th-and-18th century images of autos-de-fé in New Spain.

Bocanegra, Mathias. *Jews and the Inquisition of Mexico: The Great Auto de Fé of 1649, as related by Mathias de Bocanegra*. Translated and edited, with notes, bibliography. Introduction by Seymour B. Liebman. Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1974.

Jews and the Inquisition of Mexico: the Great auto de fé of 1649, as related by Mathias de Bocanegra is one of the most important records that have survived from the Novohispanic Inquisition due to the importance of the auto of 1649. His informative account of all the details pertaining to the largest auto in the history of New Spain reveals significant technical and biographical facts useful for my study. Most of the authors that have studied in one way or the other characteristics of autos in New Spain cite this account. Bocanegra's account includes the building details of the stage used, which was to hold over 30,000 invitees. He describes the procession of the green cross, which was immediately followed by the actual auto. The invitations and their distribution are also described, but most importantly, he explains the types of prayers and punishments concerning the different victims of the auto.

One of the most astonishing details about his account is the identification of each victim that was killed and reconciled to Catholicism during this and other three autos of the mid 17th- century. The details regarding the victims will help me create a more concrete analysis of the Native situation. In fact, about two thirds of the account deals mainly with the individual cases of each of these victims. Since most of the documents

deal exclusively with Jewish victims, it is necessary to study these types of accounts in order to contrast them with the few documents that deal with Indians and the Inquisition. In addition, such elaborated accounts further support one of the main details concerning the few images of autos that have survived: the victims. While the invitees and the details of the actual events surrounding this great auto are very important for Bocanegra, it is the victims and their individual cases that captured most of his attention. This contrasts with most of the images of public autos where no attention is paid to the victims.¹⁹ The images also depict the entire spectacle, including the daily activities surrounding it. In fact, this is one of the few details that coincide with Bocanegra's account, which include the fabrication of the grand stage, the invitations, and the overall importance of the actual event.

As a result, Mathias Bocanegra's has been the most cited source when dealing with autos-de-fé and the Inquisition of New Spain. For the purpose of my thesis, Bocanegra represents not only a proof of the grandeur of the Novohispanic autos; most importantly, it reveals the discrepancies between written accounts and the images immediate to these types of public inquisitorial events. Finally, the account of the 1649 auto of Mexico City provides a detailed case-by-case analysis of the victims, which hopefully would answers some questions about the particular situation of the Native victims presented in *Un Auto de Fe en el Pueblo de San Bartolome Otzolotepec*.

¹⁹ While the variation between written and pictorial accounts of autos has been discussed, it is also important to point out that they both served different functions. For instance, while the written accounts were used as a form of official record, the pictorial depictions were most likely targeted to an audience with inquisitorial interest. As noted before and as informed by Victoria Gonzalez de Caldas, the painted images were produced for the viewership of the officials of the Inquisition.

Greenleaf, Richard E. *Inquisición y sociedad en el México colonial* . Madrid: J. Porrúa Turanzas, 1985.

Greenleaf is perhaps the only scholar who has dealt with the Novohispanic Inquisition and the particular case of the Natives. The Indians or Natives have been ignored in the inquisitorial studies of New Spain perhaps not only for the lack of documents, but also due to their complicated relationship with the Inquisition.²⁰ In fact, Greenleaf explains in several occasions throughout the entire book how difficult and confusing the separate jurisdiction of the Natives has been for scholars.²¹ Besides mentioning the particular cases of several Indians, he provides a very detailed list of documents, books, and years that may help the ethno-historian in his/her scholar quest. Of particular help are the books and documents of autos-de-fé that took place in Mexico City involving *Indios*.

This book represents a very significant contribution to the study of the Inquisition in the Americas. The last few chapters are dedicated to the study of several cases involving the northern territories. An entire chapter is dedicated to New Mexico while others deal with Spanish Louisiana, as well as to North American Protestant territories. Although these chapters may not directly relate to my thesis or in particular to my central image, it is nonetheless important to contrast these instances with the ones of the Natives of the Valley of Mexico City.

Besides all the ethnographic work developed in this book, Greenleaf provides the reader with important dates that deal with the history of the Novohispanic Inquisition. Greenleaf looks at the state of the Inquisition before the installation of the Holy Office, which lasted

²⁰ Such titles are analyzed by him and the particularities and problematic are addressed in the chapter titled. "La Inquisición Mexicana y los indios: fuente para el ethnohistoriador." Please refer to: Richard E. Greenleaf. *Inquisición y sociedad en el México colonial*. (Madrid: J. Porrúa Turanzas, 1985)

until the 19th century. Again, he is the only person who dedicates many pages of his book to the history of the *Inquisición Episcopal*. This early stage of the inquisition in New Spain consisted of several *obispos provinciales* who were given inquisitorial rights over all those under designated territories. The complications and abuses of the divided power obligated the Spanish crown to establish the Holy Office in order to centralize the inquisitorial authority.²² The Holy Office opened in New Spain by 1571, and due to the extension of the conquered territories, a second office soon followed in Lima.

A final element in this study worthy of my attention is the type of punishments that were implemented throughout the years. Although the author does not go into detail on the reasons behind each case and/or punishment, it is important to notice that no execution is ever mentioned. Moreover, Greenleaf points out how many Mestizos claimed pure “Indian” ancestry in order to be judged by the *Provisorato del Episcopado* and not directly by the Holy Office, or Inquisition.²³ This information suggests differences that existed in the treatment of the Natives, especially considering the case of the Jews who are not ignored by Greenleaf in his expansive study.²⁴

Perez, Joseph. *La inquisicion espanola/ The Spanish Inquisition*. Martinez Rosca S.A. Ediciones, 2006.

Throughout the process of writing this thesis, several books became necessary tool for the development of my ideas. One of those books was *The Spanish Inquisition* by Joseph Perez. The detailed information and interpretation provided by Perez allowed me to

²¹ The separate jurisdiction was called the *Provisorato del Episcopado*

²²Richard Greenleaf. *Inquisicion y Sociedad en el Mexico colonial*. (Madrid: J. Porrúa, 1985),155-182.

²³ Ibid. 134.

construct a background for the history of the Jews as related to the Spanish Inquisition. Before explaining the history of the Spanish Inquisition, Perez traces back the relations between Peninsular Jews and the different religious groups throughout the medieval period. One particular idea that became essential for the development of my thesis was the tracing of modern Spanish anti-Semitism.

Although several dates had an impact on the creation of Spanish-Jewish prejudice, he notes how the Black Plague represents an unprecedented event on the history of European anti-Semitism. “On all sides, people turned against Jews. They were even accused of, for instance, propagating the plague by poisoning the water wells.”²⁵ The friction between Christian Peninsulars and other religious groups before the conquest of the Americas shaped much of the relations that Colonizers had with Novohispanic Natives.

Another important part of the book is Perez’s explanation of the different categories in which Jews fell; *Conversos*, *Marranos* etc... The system of categorization which was employed by the Spanish Inquisition to judge those involved in unorthodox religious practices was later employed in the Americas. Perez does not directly tie the practices of the Inquisition in Spain with those in New Spain, nonetheless it helped me to visualize how such procedures were adjusted and utilized on the Natives of the Americas.

**Caldas, Victoria Gonzalez de. *Judíos o cristianos?: el proceso de fe Sancta Inquisitio*.
Universidad de Sevilla: Secretariado de Publicaciones, 2000.**

²⁴ Also, it is important to notice that the Natives were not murdered once the power of the Inquisition was established. However, the punishment by torture and death towards the Jews continued throughout the history of the Novohispanic Inquisition

The scholarship of Victoria Gonzalez de Caldas was an important source for the development of the history of the inquisition in Spain and the history of the paintings of autos-de-fé. Several questions regarding the formation of the Spanish Inquisition arose throughout the conceptual and writing processes of my thesis. Many answers and many interpretations are offered by several authors, especially considering the well documented nature of the history of the inquisition in Europe. However, Gonzales de Caldas offers an interpretation that helped me understand the development of this hegemonic institution in both sides of the Atlantic. She argues that although anti-Semitism has a great impact on the creation of the inquisition, it was political unity the main factor behind its formation.

Gonzalez de Caldas discusses that the unification of Spain as a nation, which at the time was composed of city-states, was based on ideas of race, and faith.²⁶ By the time the Catholic Kings assumed the throne in 1479 they were to administer over a “country exhausted and divided by civil war” whose only common institution was to be the inquisition.²⁷ Unification of a city-state based territory was also an important factor for the development of the inquisition in New Spain. The *cuidado y vigilancia* observed over the catholic dogma in Spain was transferred to the newly conquered territories which ranged much larger in size over the Iberian Peninsula.

Although not included in this literature review, other books of Gonzales de Caldas were useful in the development of a historical background behind the paintings of autos-de-fé produced in Spain. She points out some of the possibly reasoning behind their

²⁵ Joseph Perez, *La inquisicion espanola/ The Spanish Inquisition* (Martinez Roca S A Ediciones, 2006), 5

²⁶ Victoria González de Caldas, *Judíos o cristianos?: el proceso de fe Sancta Inquisitio*. Sevilla (Universidad de Sevilla, Secretariado de Publicaciones, 2000), 164-165

²⁷ Victoria González de Caldas, *Judíos o cristianos?: el proceso de fe Sancta Inquisitio*. Sevilla (Universidad de Sevilla, Secretariado de Publicaciones, 2000), 165

production and patronage. In addition, Gonzales de Caldas points out how specific the negotiations between artists and Inquisitorial patronage were. This resulted in a genre of art that was almost completely manipulated by the desires of an intuition with a very specific agenda in mind.

Rivera, Diego, and Carmen Gaitán Rojo. *Diego Rivera y la inquisición: un puente en el tiempo*. México: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2008.

This last source comes in the form of both, a literature and visual resource. As a visual source, *Diego Rivera y la Inquisición* was an exhibition I was able to see in Mexico City at the Museo Mural Diego Rivera during a research trip in 2008. Also, this exhibit represents one of the latest, and perhaps, most important attempts to encompass visual material regarding the Novohispanic Inquisition in México. Documents and paintings relating to Jews and the inquisition were exhibited in conjunction with a well detailed analysis of their influence over Diego Rivera and his mural titled *Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in Alameda Park*, (1948). Although the art of Diego Rivera does not have an impact on my personal research, the exhibition, which through visual material traced the history of the Jews in Mexico, served as the most important visual source I had to work with. In a similar way, the catalogue produced for the exhibition represents an important literature resource used in my thesis.

Although there are several essays that served as informational background for the development of some of my ideas Alicia Gojmal Backal's essay especially related to my thesis. In the catalogue, Alicia Gojman de Backal wrote an essay titled "Inquisición en la Nueva España." In this essay, Gojman de Backal explains, among many other historical facts about the Novohispanic Inquisition, some of the procedures for autos-de-fé. In her

interpretation, she includes a brief discussion about *sambenitos* (canonical robes used in autos-de-fé), which served to create part of my discussion on Natives and their expected behavior in relation to autos-de-fé. Big part of my project concentrates of the repressive nature of Natives as colonized subjects. However, the colonized Native nature does not fully inform about their full subjectivity or its participation in the Novohispanic society. Backal mentions the reproduction of *sambenitos* as souvenir products, which in my view, notify on the possible Native capacity for political commentary. Most importantly, the reproduction of *sambenitos* testifies for the will of Natives to independently participate in the economic aspects of a colonial society. The fact that such a powerful institutional object was re-appropriated by Novohispanic Natives shows how their behavior, in relation to *autos*, goes beyond their expected participation as spectators. Finally, Backal's essay, together with the visual experience of an exhibit such as *Diego Rivera y la Inquisicion*, were significant tools I used describe aspects of the Inquisition in Mexico City.

IV. Methodology: Modes of Analysis and Interpretation

In certain cases one of the main challenges that scholars of colonial studies must face is the absence of documents. In the case of New Spain, documentation abounds to support the historical perception of the hegemonic forces, which many times tend to overshadow, or erase, many other perspectives. In the case of autos-de-fé, the only documentation that exists serves to recreate formal aspects of the event. The historical details available are similar to those found technical analyses of public spectacles. This perspective tends to reiterate the supremacy of inquisitorial authority over the supposed sinners at stake. In order to offer a different opinion about some of the victims and unprivileged spectators,

we must consider alternative methodologies of study that could help us understand the role victims played during public *autos*. Perhaps, the witnesses and victims' point of view could possibly contradict the sources we study. Additionally, studying the historical participation of the victims in *autos* would facilitate an understanding of possible consequences these events had in their development as subjects in the discussed society. We must recur to these historical and formal analysis since the gaps we are trying to fill are precisely the lost perspectives of victims and witnesses.

A necessary first method will be a historical analysis of the inquisition in Spain and New Spain. The main purpose of this method is to give light to the details that pertain to the inquisitorial treatment of Jews and later the Novohispanic Natives. By comparing and contrasting the different aspects of the mentioned groups I will give light to how the treatment of the Jews sets a precedent in the treatment of Natives in New Spain. The historical analysis will aim to cover the history of the Spanish Inquisition and its transference to the Americas. *Un auto de fe en el pueblo de San Bartolomé Otzolotepec's* formal details directly tie it to a tradition of painting that dates back to the beginning of the Spanish Inquisition. As such, the painting's historical antecedents date back to the activities of the Inquisition before the conquest of Mexico. In order to establish a concrete analysis of the possible social relations between Natives and the Novohispanic Inquisition, one must consider the original purposes of the Spanish Inquisition. In this presentation I will demonstrate some of the differences and contrasts between the relations of the Inquisition with Crypto-Jews and Natives of central México. SBO shows how some of the practices of the Spanish Inquisition were transferred to the Americas. Nonetheless, the 16th century Inquisition of New Spain, and its previous history in the

Iberian Peninsula will set the tone for the procedures involving Natives during the rest of the Colonial period.

The second method I will use to examine the imagery in discussion is a formal approach. Although I will use various images of autos-de-fé, I will limit a detailed formalist analysis only to SBO. The challenge will be to demonstrate the importance of the painting, not only as a representation of the live event, but also, as the role this image may have served in communicating the event to viewers of the image. A detailed analysis of the various pictorial elements of SBO will reveal much needed information regarding Natives and their role within Novohispanic inquisitorial procedures. It is important for me to recur to traditional methods in art history in order to better understand a work of art, which possesses next to no information to support its historical position and function.

One last approach will consider the space where these autos took place. A spatial analysis will also help me understand the more complicated history of the space used for public displays of death. As part of a more complex history of *autos*, an analysis of space will clarify some of the historical background of these spectacles in New Spain. Along with this history, I will try to make sense of autos-de-fé as a process that consequently gets illustrated in SBO. The main idea is to examine the Novohispanic “space of death” before the conquest, during the years of conversion, and its culmination in 18th-century autos-de-fé. The pre- and post-conquest “spaces of death” converge in Diego de Valades’ *Rhetorica Cristiana*. The purposes behind both, the Aztec sacrifices and the colonial auto-de-fé are combined in an effort to illustrate the idea of public death and its space before and after the conquest. The space for *autos* is fed by a spatial memory that contains several centuries of historical layering. The meaning of the “the space of death” becomes

a polysemic palimpsest that is interpreted by the local population based in social and individual historical contexts.

In conclusion, in order to be able to study autos-de-fé in New Spain as both, a genre of painting, and as a public performance, I feel it is necessary to use the methodologies I have presented. The formalist approach to the illustrations will help create ties between the images I am using, and consequently to create a coherent history of auto-de-fé images as a distinct pictorial genre. Since SBO represents the main image of my thesis, a more thorough analysis of *autos* and the impact on Natives and Novohispanic civilization becomes absolutely necessary. Due to an apparent lack of documentation regarding the experience of the Native during autos, or throughout the colonial period, a historical analysis becomes a useful way to create a perspective about a group that has always been ignored. Finally, through investigations on the “space of death”, the history of public displays of death can be traced to further understand autos-de-fé rituals in general. In my thesis, *Un Auto de Fe en el Pueblo de San Bartolome Oztolotepec* emerges as the principal agent where all of the different methodologies applied will converge. This will be done in an attempt to make sense of a spectacle and a genre of painting that reflects the power of a hegemonic colonial force under which SBO was created.

Chapter 1

Historical Background

Jews, Conversos, and Marranos.

SBO's formal details are directly tied to a tradition of painting that dates back to the beginning of the Spanish Inquisition. As such, SBO's historical antecedents date back to the activities of the inquisition before the conquest of Mexico. When SBO, *Auto de Fé en la Plaza Mayor*, and *Auto de fé en la Plaza de San Francisco* are viewed side by side, the similarities and differences help to establish a series of questions that must be addressed before further formal analysis is created. A difference that strikes me about SBO in relation to its Spanish predecessors is the ability of the viewer to distinguish the race and gender of the represented *auto* victims. As noted by the catalogue of the MUNAL, the victims of the illustrated event are both female and male. Furthermore, according to the lower cartouche of SBO, the victims are considered *naturales* (naturals), or Natives. These details motivate questions about the relationship between the inquisition and Natives of central Mexico. In order to establish a concrete analysis of the possible social relations among Natives and Peninsulars within the Novohispanic activities of the inquisition, one must consider the original purposes of the Spanish Inquisition. In other words, a historical analysis of the Spanish Inquisition will help establish how this institution created its victims in Spain, and later in New Spain.

The history of the victims of the inquisition in Spain, and consequently in New Spain, is composed of a series of complicated events that can be traced back to the Middle Ages. For the purpose of my thesis, I will concentrate on a specific turning point; the categorization of indigenous people of the Americas as Natives. The end of their

Mesoamerican subjectivity and history had its start the moment Columbus set foot in the Caribbean region. From that first encounter on, the indigenous inhabitants of that island became Natives. Similarly, the moment when Cortes first entered the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan, the Nahuatl people became Natives in the eyes of the *conquistadores*. In both cases, the indigenous peoples' subjectivity changed by means of the relations they formed with the invaders of their lands. Their being was to be slowly transformed by a series of invasions, social contracts, and radical modifications to their civic space. The Nahuatl became the Indio, the *Natural*, the *Casta*, the Native--the inquisition's new victim. For that reason I have decided to use mainly the term "Native" to refer to the Indians of central New Spain.²⁸ Within the Spanish colonial period, the relationship between people in power and those subjected to it constantly changed. In order to understand the relationship of the inquisition to the victims of *autos* such as the ones depicted in SBO, one must explore the history of the Natives, in relation to the Peninsulars. Equally important, one must be conscious of the fact that the affiliation between the Spanish and their colonized subjects is not the first instance when a dynamic between Christian Peninsulars and their dominated subjects is practiced. The history of the Jews in Spain and the creation of the inquisition would serve as a platform from which to view how the Christian Peninsulars' first victims were created in the Iberian Peninsula.

Returning to the notion of a historical turning point, I will posit the following questions: Is there such a starting point at which the Christian Peninsulars were able to

²⁸ The specific term "Native" was not necessarily used by Cortes or Columbus. However, the term implies the presence of Indigenous people in the conquered lands, prior to the arrival of the conquistadors. My point in using this term is to emphasize the fact that an entire different society had already existed before the conquest of the American territories. I am aware that different terms to refer to indigenous people are used

recognize themselves against their dominated subjects? If so, can a specific event—and a precise date—be used from which to trace the history of the victims of the inquisition in Spain? Several historians dealing with the history of Judaism in the Iberian Peninsula seem to trace this turning point to sometime in the Middle Ages. Anti-Semitism in Spain cannot be linked to a single date or historical event. The circumstances that lead to the creation of the Spanish Inquisition and the persecution of the Jews were numerous. Nonetheless, anti-Semitism has its roots in the socio-economic circumstances that surrounded the Iberian Peninsula following the Black Death of the 14th century.²⁹ Before limiting the historical analysis of the Jews to Spain, one must understand that hatred against Jews went back to centuries of Muslim dominion.³⁰

In *The Spanish Inquisition*, Joseph Perez argues that in “medieval Spain, three religions (Muslim, Christian, and Jewish) thus more or less coexisted, but only two were dominant: initially the Arabic, then the Christian.”³¹ To say that Jews coexisted with Muslims and Christians alike does not mean that there was tolerance amongst the three religions. Perez argues that due to economic reasons, the Muslims had no other option but to tolerate Jews and Christians.³² The three religious groups together contributed to the economy of the Iberian Peninsula. Such coexistence is called by Perez a *de facto* tolerance: “Their status did, nevertheless, allow them to preserve not only their

by different scholars of different disciplines. In this case, the term “Native” better suits the purpose of this project.

²⁹ Joseph Perez, *La inquisicion espanola/ The Spanish Inquisition* (Martinez Roca S A Ediciones, 2006), 3

³⁰ The complicated nature of the social relations between Christians and Jews in Europe has been the object of studies for many scholars. I am aware of how limiting my analysis may be, but for the purpose of this thesis, I will concentrate on the relations between Christian Peninsulars a Jews around the creation of the Spanish Inquisition.

³¹ Joseph Perez, *La inquisicion espanola/ The Spanish Inquisition* (Martinez Roca S A Ediciones, 2006), 3

³² *Ibid.* 3

possessions, but also the freedom to practice their respective cults.”³³ The short lived tolerance became intolerance by the 13th century once Christians began to take reign over the Iberian Peninsula.

In 1215, Pope Innocent III issued a proclamation that limited relations between Jews and Christians to solely economic purposes.³⁴ This decree was ignored by northern Iberian Peninsula Christians, who allowed Jews to live among them even after persecution had obligated them to flee from Muslim territories. The Jews’ commercial experience and knowledge of Muslim languages and territories allowed them to enter Christian land. Also, legal codes, such as the one promulgated by Alfonso X of Castile in the 13th century, “allowed Jews to live among Christians in a kind of perpetual captivity, “so that their presence should be a reminder that they are descended from those who crucified our Lord Jesus Christ’.”³⁵ Social unrest between Christians and Muslims during the 13th century represented the end of the coexistence between the three major religions of Spain. The coetaneous relationship between Christians and other religious groups was short-lived. As the Christians gained control over the different Muslim Iberian areas, their tolerance towards Jews grew weaker. In fact, the rules of the Council of Lateran, which were ignored by the Peninsular Christians, were to be reinforced and intensified with the Council of Zamora.³⁶ “Christians could not share meals with Jews, nor employ Jewish wet nurses, nor have sexual relations with Jews or Jewesses; it was also proposed that Jews should wear a distinctive sign.”³⁷

³³ Ibid. 2

³⁴ Ibid. 3

³⁵ Joseph Perez, *La inquisicion espanola/ The Spanish Inquisition* (Martinez Roca S A Ediciones, 2006), 3

³⁶ Ibid. 3

³⁷ Ibid. 3

The hatred against Jews intensified due to two major factors. The first factor was the hatred that surrounded Jews as tax collectors.³⁸ The second was the social unrest during the 14th century Black Death period that annihilated twenty percent of the European Population. The relative freedom Jews had enjoyed under Muslim rulership allowed them to create an independent society in which they excelled in local commerce. Prelates, Feudal Lords and kings always placed Jews in charge of tax collection, which in turn slowly charged the population with hatred against them. Unpopular administrative practices such as tax collection had been assigned to Jews from the time of Muslim reign. For hundreds of years, the Muslim and Christian people of Europe developed an extreme dislike toward Jews that culminated during the period of the Black Death.

In *Menocal in Ornament of the World*, Maria Rosa argues that the bubonic plague offers a solid explanation for the rise of religious intolerance in the Iberian Peninsula.³⁹ The chaos and desperation throughout Europe were felt in civic and religious institutions. In turn, “the undermining of the social and religious order, resulted, among other things, in the scapegoating of certain minority groups.”⁴⁰ The inexplicable tragedy that killed so many in Europe was blamed on the tolerance of non-Christian believers. Joseph Perez similarly argues that the Black Death was the beginning of anti-Semitism in Spain: “On all sides, people turned against Jews. Jews were even accused, for instance, of

³⁸ The specific main reason why Jews have always been given the task of tax collection is unclear. However, Usury has always been condemned by “western society.” The catholic Advent online explain how from Greek times, Tax collection was regarded as unnatural and later condemned by the Christians as going against the principles of mercy and humanity. These negative views on tax collectors seem to have been the perfect scapegoat to discriminate and undermine Jews in European society. The New Advent. “Usury.” The New Advent <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15235c.htm>

³⁹ Rosa Menocal, *The ornament of the world: how Muslims, Jews, and Christians created a culture of tolerance in medieval Spain* (Boston: Little, Brown, 2006), 268

⁴⁰ Ibid. 268

propagating the plague by poisoning the water wells.”⁴¹ The previous *de-facto* tolerance became intolerance towards Jews and Jewish beliefs. To further complicate the situation, many preachers participated in fueling the population with hatred against Jews. From this point on, the persecution of Jews throughout the Iberian Peninsula and other European countries intensified, obligating thousands to flee or convert: “Those who were not killed (and it is estimated that some 100,000 may have perished) either converted or fled to Muslim Lands.”⁴² Menocal and Perez agree that the Black Death constitutes the most significant turning point for the beginning of modern anti-Semitism. Even so, it is important to understand that the recognition of Christian Peninsulars as the hegemonic power was a progressive development that changes according to the socio-historical context that is being studied.⁴³ For the purpose of my thesis, it is important to identify the background of the Spanish Inquisition in order to understand the hatred that fueled the activities of this powerful institution.

By the time Isabella and Ferdinand took over the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon in 1479, Christian anti-Semitism had become an affair that involved several groups. Peninsular Christians were managing their social relations not only with Jews, but also with other groups spawned as a consequence of religious intolerance. For example, Jews who converted to Christianity were known as *Conversos* (‘converted ones’ also known as New Christians) and *Marranos* (those who reverted to their original Jewish religious practices.) The group of *Conversos* grew large after the Black Death due to the number of

⁴¹ Joseph Perez, *La inquisicion espanola/ The Spanish Inquisition* (Martinez Roca S A Ediciones, 2006), 5

⁴² Rosa Menocal, *The ornament of the world: how Muslims, Jews, and Christians created a culture of tolerance in medieval Spain* (Boston: Little, Brown, 2006), 268

⁴³ It is important to note the idea of the Other is a 20th century term that was not part of Christian philosophies of the time.

Jews who decided to remain in their native lands. Refusing to leave their lands and properties, many Jews were obligated to convert in order to remain in Christian territories. Although many Christians in the Iberian Peninsula simply discriminated against the Jews despite their groupings (Jews, *Marranos* or *Conversos*), it was the *Marranos* who inspired most of the laws that separated any type of Jew from the rest of the population. These Jewish sub-groups continued to live in separate quarters of Spanish regions and were targeted by *Conversos*. Pérez mentions that the Franciscan *Converso*, Alonso de Espina, and the Hieronymite Alonso de Oropesa argued that the presence of the *Marranos* and Jews constituted an obstacle for the complete assimilation of *Conversos*.⁴⁴ In fact, Pérez maintains that the 1459 remarks of Espina, “contained the seeds of the Inquisition against judaizing Christians and also of the expulsion of the Jews.”⁴⁵ It is also important to note that *Conversos* were not the only ones attacking Jewish religious practices. Dominicans like Alonso de Hojeda and Tomas de Torquemada were also fervent believers of the Jewish betrayal against the Christians.⁴⁶ Ferdinand and Isabella rose to power under this complicated discriminatory climate, which the creation of the Inquisition attempted to be resolve.

One year after Ferdinand and Isabella began joint rulership of Spain, the inquisition was created with the aim of punishing *Conversos*, *Marranos*, and other heretics alike. The Catholic Kings implemented a series of rules that protected Jews and *Conversos*. The rules that obligated these groups to live in separate quarters and to wear

⁴⁴ Joseph Perez, *La inquisicion espanola/ The Spanish Inquisition* (Martinez Roca S A Ediciones, 2006), 18

⁴⁵ Ibid. (Menocal 2006) 18

⁴⁶ James Maxwell Anderson, "Daily life through history" series. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2002), 62. The relation between the history of the European inquisition and the Dominicans is an intricate and important aspect of this projects that will be fully analyzed in the dissertation level.

distinctive clothing were cancelled.⁴⁷ And although the Catholic Kings protected Jews from expulsion and public violence, it was the *Conversos* who remained the center of Spanish anti-Semitism. In fact, many sources agree that the inquisition in Spain was created mainly in order to attack *Conversos* who were accused of continuing Jewish religious practices. For example, Michael Alpert in *Crypto-Judaism and the Spanish Inquisition* mentions that, “the Holy office concerned itself only with Christians and specifically with recent converted Jews or their descendants.”⁴⁸ James M. Anderson in *Daily Life During Spanish Inquisition* suggests that the Catholic monarchs were convinced by the Dominicans to establish an Inquisition, arguing that, “*Conversos* throughout Andalucía and indeed throughout all of Castilla were secretly engaged in Hebraic rites.”⁴⁹ *Conversos* thus constituted the most important target for the almost three and a half centuries of the inquisition in Spain. Although the persecution of *Conversos* may offer an explanation of the founding of the Spanish Inquisition, it is necessary to inquire further into socio-economic explanations in order to understand the transference of the inquisition to the Americas.

Vicoria Gonzalez de Caldas, in *Judos o Cristianos; El Proceso de fe Sancta Inquisicion*, offers several explanations for the formation of the Spanish inquisition, which go beyond the argument of medieval religious intolerance against Jews and *Conversos*. Considering the laws passed by Catholic Kings protecting the Jews, it is difficult to interpret the beginning of the inquisition as inspired by pure hatred against this

⁴⁷ Joseph Perez, *La inquisicion espanola/ The Spanish Inquisition* (Martinez Roca S A Ediciones, 2006), 16

⁴⁸ Michael Alpert, *Crypto-judaism and the Spanish inquisition* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), 15. Also, as per John Chuchiack in the 2010 panel on the Novohispanic Inquisition, anybody who was not baptized could not be judged under the jurisdiction of the Spanish Inquisition.

religious group. Thus, if Isabella and Ferdinand began their reign protecting the Jewish population, what was the main motivation for the creation of the Inquisition? One of the most important original motives of this institution resides in the political ideal of unification. Gonzalez de Caldas argues that the unification of a nation in formation, such as Spain, which at the time was composed of city-states, was based on ideas of race and faith.⁵⁰ By the time Ferdinand assumed the Spanish throne in 1479, he was to rule over a “country exhausted and divided by civil war,” whose only common institution was to be the inquisition.⁵¹ The consolidation of the Iberian Peninsula as a forming country thus depended on religious unification which, in many ways, was carried out by the inquisition. The Spain of 1479 seemed to fulfill all the necessary requirements for the creation of a powerful institution of control. While religious unity may have been the main political reason behind the formation of the Holy Office, medieval intolerance against Jews served as the perfect opportunity to demonstrate its power over non-Catholic subjects. Many Jews, *Conversos*, and *Marranos* decided to flee to places such as Portugal where anti-Semitism was less harsh. In 1492, many Jews were obligated to convert or flee from Spain. Considering the newly expanded territories of Spain in the Americas, many Jews opted to flee to the other side of the Atlantic.⁵² Having analyzed the historical aspects of the relationship of Peninsular Catholics with Jews and the

⁴⁹ James Maxwell Anderson, *Daily life during the Spanish Inquisition* (The Greenwood Press "Daily life through history" series. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2002), 62

⁵⁰ Victoria González de Caldas, *Judíos o cristianos?: el proceso de fe Sancta Inquisitio*. Sevilla (Universidad de Sevilla, Secretariado de Publicaciones, 2000), 164-165 (Caldas 2000)

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 165

⁵² The history of the Crypto-Jews of New Spain has been investigated in detail by many authors. Although they represent a very important part of the history of the Inquisition in the Americas, I will concentrate on the way Natives were being dealt with by this important institution.

creation of the Spanish Inquisition, I must now look at the original motives for the transferring and establishment of those relations in the Americas.

The character of the social relations between Christian Peninsulars and Jews changed according to the prevailing economic and spiritual context. Regarding the inquisition, the perception of Jews arose from a combination of hatred forged in late medieval times and a political agenda that aimed to create a nation under one single religion. But tolerance was always tied to economics, so a *de-facto* tolerance was to be applied in the Americas. There are many similarities in the way Christian Peninsulars socially related to Natives in New Spain and to Jews in the Iberian Peninsula. Before discussing these similarities and differences, it is necessary to understand the way Peninsulars faced a new civilization in the Americas. This new civilization was different; nonetheless many official policies and philosophies on the nature of Natives were based on the way Peninsulars dealt with Jews in Europe.

Cuidado y Vigilancia in the Americas.

Most of the reasoning behind the installation of the Novohispanic Inquisition will be discussed in chapter 2. However, the declaration of King Phillip II is clear in its purposes. Individuals were to be punished for crimes of “false religious practice.” The King’s letter specifically mentions Natives, or *Naturales*. The translation reads as follows:

...considering the grandeur and excellence of such provinces, and the singular grace and benefit that our Lord, through his piety, and compassion that he has used with the *naturales* in these times by giving them clear knowledge of our Catholic Faith, and that it is necessary to have special care and surveillance with the

conservation and devotion and good name and reputation and fame of its population, our *naturales*.⁵³

This letter demonstrates how on both sides of the Atlantic the Inquisition aimed to make sure that Catholic education was carried out properly. In Spain, Jews represented the group most likely to fall outside Catholic dogma, due to their ancient beliefs and traditions. The “*cuidado y vigilancia*” (care and vigilance) over Catholic dogma was to guard *Conversos* and *Marranos* that refused to flee and remained loyal to their Jewish spiritual traditions. For similar reasons, the “*cuidado y vigilancia*” shifted to the Natives after the American territories were conquered. However, Natives were not Jews, and while in Spain the *re-conquista* from the Muslim dominion assured the unification of a large territory, in the Americas a very different spiritual conquest awaited Friars and Inquisitors alike.

The Novohispanic Inquisition had been concerned with Natives before 1571. By the time the Novohispanic Inquisition was established, it was clear that Natives were to be controlled and judged under a separate jurisdiction within this institution. The reference to the Natives in the letter of King Phillip II helps to explain the confusion mentioned by Richard E. Greenleaf in “The Inquisition and the Indians of New Spain: A Study in Jurisdictional Confusion.” “Because of an unclear understanding on the part of the new inquisitors and the clergy alike, the functions, titles, and procedures of the Holy Office and the ordinary jurisdiction in Indian matters were confused for several

⁵³The original text reads as follows: ...y considerada la grandeza y excelencia de las dichas Provincias, y la singular gracia y beneficio de que Nuestro Señor por su piedad, y misericordia en estos tiempo ha usado con los naturales de ellas en darles claro conocimiento de nuestra santa fe católica, y que es tan necesario tener especial cuidado y vigilancia en la conservación de la devoción y buen nombre y reputación y fama de su pobladores, nuestros naturales..... José Toribio Medina, and Solange Alberro, *Historia del tribunal*

decades.”⁵⁴ Greenleaf elaborates in the same essay about the confusing legal situation in which Natives were to be treated within the Novohispanic Inquisition: “After 1571 the Tribunal of the Holy Office acted as a fact-finding agency in the uncovering and disciplining of Indian transgressions against orthodoxy. Actual control over Indian orthodoxy reverted to the bishop’s or archbishop’s office and was placed under the care of the Provisor, or Vicar General of the diocese or archdiocese.”⁵⁵ Furthermore, the separation of Native affairs from the Novohispanic Tribunal of the Holy Office represented a culminating position on the treatment of Natives. The abuses against Natives in different areas of New Spain obligated the Spanish Inquisition to establish a permanent office in New Spain. The new offices began establishing control over the inquisitorial power given by the Vatican in the 16th century to many religious orders. The baffling rules by which Indians were judged reflected the confusion in the way Natives’ subjectivity was being interpreted and reinterpreted. It is with documents such as the letter of King Phillip II that one can begin to unravel difficulties in understanding the complicated rationales under which Natives were being disciplined—but, most importantly, perceived. The debates and confusion in New Spain in respect to the Native’s judgment and treatment coincides with the 16th century debates in Valladolid between Bartolome de las Casas and Juan Gines de Sepulveda on the subject of the nature of American Natives.

del santo oficio de la inquisición en México (San Ángel, México: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1991), 43.

⁵⁴ Richard Greenleaf, “The Inquisition and the Indians of New Spain: A Study in Jurisdictional Confusion,” *The Americas* Vol. 22 No. 2 (October 1965): 141

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 141

⁵⁶ The Vicar general of the area where SBO took place was Joseph de Lanciego y Aguilar and is indicated in the painting with the number 2 in SBO.

Christian Peninsulars began attempting to examine the nature of American Natives from day one. They did so by resorting to a system of classification that facilitated their understanding of the encountered subjects. Similar to the way Jews were being classified regarding their level of religious practice (*Conversos*, *Marranos*, New Christians), Natives fell into a scheme of categorization that ranged from “noble savages” to “barbarians.” This system of classification always seemed to vary according to the degree of Native resistance to colonization. Most importantly, the categories were based on the Indian capacity for conversion, similar to the categories created in Europe for Jews. For example, Lewis Hanke in *All Mankind is One* discusses how Columbus in his diaries was trying to depict the Native as a kind of “noble savage.”⁵⁷ Hanke explains that Columbus referred to Natives as gentle, beautiful, and friendly people who “seemed eminently ready to accept the truths of Christianity.”⁵⁸ Perhaps Native resistance in the Caribbean islands was not as severe as Native opposition encountered in other territories, such as the Valley of Mexico and Cuzco. Unfortunately, Columbus’ experiences did not shape subsequent battles for spiritual conquest. The laws of Burgos of 1512 reflected some of the sensibilities shown by Columbus in the above quote. According to Hanke, law 24 prohibited anybody in the new territories from referring to Indians as *perros* (dogs): “There developed during the first half century of Spanish action in America a kind of polarization between the two extremes—what might be called the “dirty dog” and the “noble savage” school of thought—although there were many different and more subtle

⁵⁷Lewis Hanke and Bartolomé de las Casas, *All mankind is one: a study of the disputation between Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda in 1550 on the intellectual and religious capacity of the American Indians*. (DeKalb, Ill: Northern Illinois University Press, 1994), 4

shades of opinion in between.”⁵⁹ The opinions were divided according to the direct experiences some had with Natives. At the same time some religious orders protected the rights of Natives, others were very open about their opinions against their “barbarous” nature.

Similar to Columbus, Cortes’ first reaction can be said to be positive for the definition of American Indians’ nature of in the eyes of Christian Peninsulars. Hanke quotes Cortes:

These people live almost like those in Spain, and in so 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.⁶⁰

Cortes’ words confirm the idea that a system of classification for Natives was implemented according to the colonizers’ experiences, and the colonized peoples’ capacities to convert to Catholic religion. In this passage, Cortes cannot negate the grandeur of Tenochtitlan nor the implications of such a place for the nature of the Aztecs. On the other hand, Cortes in the quoted paragraph ties the notion of barbarism to the Native knowledge of the Christian God. We know from several chronicles that the period of Cortes’ stay in Tenochtitlan prior to the war for conquest was relatively peaceful. In this quote we can also perceive a conceptualization of the nature of the Aztecs similar to

⁵⁸ Ibid. 4 (Casas 1994). Columbus’ views on Natives do not and should not reflect the nature of Natives from the different regions of the conquered lands. One must be aware that there is a vast differences in language, costumes and overall social structure between the Natives of different regions of the Americas.

⁵⁹ Lewis Hanke and Bartolomé de las Casas, *All mankind is one: a study of the disputation between Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda in 1550 on the intellectual and religious capacity of the American Indians*. (DeKalb, Ill: Northern Illinois University Press, 1994), 9

⁶⁰ Lewis Hanke and Bartolomé de las Casas, *All mankind is one: a study of the disputation between Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda in 1550 on the intellectual and religious capacity of the American Indians*. (DeKalb, Ill: Northern Illinois University Press, 1994), 12

that used for Europeans.. However, while the Aztecs had a European capacity to govern themselves, they remained for many barbarous in nature due to their lack of Christian knowledge. Cortes' letter was written in 1520, when the battles of conquest had begun. Nonetheless, Cortes may have had several months to learn about the sophisticated way the city was socially and spatially constructed. By the 1530's, the climate had grown even more complicated.

Throughout the study of accounts written during the first half of the 16th century, one may be surprised to find differences in opinion regarding the Natives. Among those opinions we can find accounts by members of various religious orders, by Spanish clergy who had never traveled to America, and by Peninsula conquerors. Tzvetan Todorov in *The Conquest of America* explains how violence against Natives continued until 1550. Pedro de Valdivia, in his conquest of what today is known as Chile, “waged war against them, and having won, he has not failed to punish them.”⁶¹ Violence constitutes a way to undermine the will of a subject. Also, as pointed out by Todorov, the barrier of language became an excuse for liberties the conquerors took in punishing Natives and disregarding their capacity for dialogue.⁶² In other words, from the point of encounter, the nature of American Indians began to be measured by their incapacity for dialogue, and later by their incapacity to submit to the Peninsular religious will. In great part, it was the Spanish

⁶¹ Tzvetan Todorov, *The conquest of America: the question of the other* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 148

⁶² *Ibid.* 147. The difference of languages created an obstacle for any argument between Natives and Peninsulars. Hence the *Requerimiento*, a document read to Natives when first encountered by the colonizers during the conquests of different regions of America. While the document was originally created to justify the conquest it was later used to establish and immediate distinctions between Natives and Peninsulars. If the *Requerimiento* was accepted by the Natives, the Peninsular could not be taken into slavery. However, any form of resistance concluded in severe punishment on the conqueror's part. The document, which according to Todorov declared Jesus as master of the human lineage, was read to them in Castilian. The

clergy who defended the capacity of Natives to convert to Catholicism. The study of 16th century written accounts reveal how the personality of Natives, and therefore their subjectivity, was limited to their capacity to learn the teachings of the Bible.

As noted by Hanke, views on the nature of the American Natives cannot be limited to a dualistic discussion that includes only those in favor of their autonomy and those against it. Although this thesis is not primarily concerned with the long debate about the subjectivity of the Natives according to the Peninsulars, it is important to note that these views varied over all extremes of the spectrum. For example, Vasco de Quiroga maintained by the 1530's that "Indians still lived in the Golden Age, whereas Europeans had decayed."⁶³ This may be seen as a European romantic view of Natives and their relatively unknown civilization. However, Quiroga continued to defend Natives in his 1535 *Informacion*. Among the many issues discussed in *Informacion*, Quiroga opposes the cruelty exercised against Natives during conversion, which by then was a topic increasingly discussed in all realms of Spanish and New Spanish society. Quiroga's perspective, as well as the views of Gonzalo de Oviedo y Valdez, and later of Bartolome de las Casa and others, constitute important opinions in the conception of the laws that were to control the violent spiritual colonization of the Americas. Later, disputes on Natives' nature influenced the inquisitorial separation from their jurisdiction to an almost independent one. Nonetheless, when analyzing the writings and disputes of each of these figures, one will encounter references to the Native need, capacity, and overall ability to

Requerimento and its deliverance to Natives created an immediate barrier for dialogue. The Peninsular religious ideas were forced without an option for reciprocal discourse.

⁶³ Lewis Hanke and Bartolomé de las Casas, *All mankind is one: a study of the disputation between Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda in 1550 on the intellectual and religious capacity of the American Indians*. (DeKalb, Ill: Northern Illinois University Press, 1994), 16

understand the teachings of the Catholic religion. It is in these discussions that the system of categorization takes place. Whether Natives are viewed as “noble savages” or “dirty dogs”, their subjectivity begins to be negatively perceived by those who attack as well as those who protect them, both in person and in writing. The disputes between Sepulveda and de las Casas summarize many of the issues and concerns regarding defense against the cruelty towards Novohispanic Natives, which consequently constituted a different perspective on the nature of 16th century Natives of central México.

The confrontation between Sepulveda and de las Casas took place between 1550 and 1551 in Valladolid, Spain. Bartolome de las Casas had spent almost 50 years in the territories of New Spain. His direct contact with Natives provided the ground for writings that disputed the opposing views of Sepulveda regarding their ability to learn the European language, logic and artistry.⁶⁴ Similar to Quiroga, de las Casas praised Native governments and overall civilization, arguing that their systems surpassed, “by no small measure,” those of the Greeks and Romans.⁶⁵ This comparison shows how unknown civilizations and their capacity to govern themselves were being measured according to familiar Western systems. On the other hand, Sepulveda used all the Native practices that were unfamiliar to European civilizations to create an impression of barbarism. Comparison with familiar European societies became the means by which to praise and criticize the newly colonized people and their civilizations.

The first and most important argument of Sepulveda was the notion that Natives “were in such a state of barbarism that force was required to liberate them from this

⁶⁴ Lewis Hanke and Bartolomé de las Casas, *All mankind is one: a study of the disputation between Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda in 1550 on the intellectual and religious capacity of the American Indians*. (DeKalb, Ill: Northern Illinois University Press, 1994), 74-75

condition.”⁶⁶ In order to respond to Sepulveda’s argument, de las Casas analyzed the different stages of Aristotelian barbarism. Aristotle, according to de las Casas, measured barbarism based on the following traits; “savage behavior” lack of written language, and lack of all reasoning (i.e. Christianity in this case).⁶⁷ All these qualities that informed barbarian categorization of Natives as barbarous in Aristotelian terms were disputed by de las Casas. One of the most remarkable arguments of de las Casas was that if American Natives showed any signs of barbarism, their barbarism would pale in comparison to Spanish treatment of the Indian. The views of Aristotle, which according to Todorov informed much of Sepulveda’s argument against Natives, were disputed on more than one occasion by de las Casas.

Todorov contends that Sepulveda based his justification for the application of force against Natives on Aristotelian hierarchies: “the body must be subjected to the soul, matter to form, children to parents, women to men, and slaves (tautologically defined as inferior beings) to masters.”⁶⁸ De las Casas repudiated this view of the nature of the slave by arguing that American Natives possessed sufficient judgment to govern themselves. Todorov maintains that although Christianity is not free of hegemonic hierarchies, the core difference between both beliefs relies on the fact that Greco-Roman dualities are irreversible. The main argument in the Aristotelian tradition consists of the idea that a slave lacks and cannot obtain reason, whereas Christian faith can be achieved through conversion.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 77

⁶⁶ Ibid. 83

⁶⁷ Ibid. 83. All these traits and categories of barbarism are further explained by las Casas and should be closely studied.

Regardless of de las Casas' experiences and his elaborate reports on Natives' ability to govern themselves, he nevertheless once again reduced the nature of Novohispanic Natives to their capacity to convert to Catholicism. Thus, the will to convert informs the way Peninsulars perceive the nature of Natives. Once more, the undermining of Jewish people by Catholic Peninsulars and the Spanish Inquisition provided the basis for defining their relationship with their victims and assisted in the formation of systems of categorization that constructed Novohispanic social hierarchies. As we have noted, the inquisition aimed for those social hierarchies to remain in place through public events such as autos-de-fé, which reminded the masses in what social groups power resided.

If we observe the way Jews were oppressed in Spain prior to the conquest of the Americas, comparisons with the treatment of Novohispanic Natives will reveal vast differences. However, while a barbarian nature perceived in Jews was never questioned, it was their will not to convert that aroused Christian Peninsulars' hatred. The Native and the Jew, although never perceived as the same, were being undermined on similar bases of spiritual conversion. As noted earlier in this chapter, although the difference of faith was used ideologically by Christians to undermine the will of Jews, it was the economic contexts of any given period that determined relations between Jews, *Conversos* and Peninsulars. Knowledge of business kept many Jews in good relations with the King. In addition, Jews' knowledge of commerce of the territories where they conducted business maintained their relative freedom in anti-Semite territories. Economics in New Spain also played an important role in the categorization of Natives within the structure of the Inquisition and the *Provisorato*.

⁶⁸ Tzvetan Todorov, *The conquest of America: the question of the other* (Norman: University of Oklahoma

Cañeque argues that the color of the skin informed much of the hatred against Natives and other minorities in the Americas. Borrowing from Homi K. Bhabba, Cañeque explains that the color of the colonizers' skin became the key signifier "for cultural and racial difference."⁶⁹ In a way, the Aristotelian hierarchies were played out using skin color differentiation. In turn, this form of differentiation established the master-slave roles observed between the Peninsulars and the Natives. For example, in autos-de-fé, skin color was a signifier necessary for the public humiliation and punishment of the victims. However, color was not the main visible symbol for the public death of the heretic. Cañeque explains that skin color was a tool used by the inquisition as a public advertisement for the Natives' crimes and, "their insignificance as human beings."⁷⁰ Their bodies, as explained by Cañeque, meant labor. Here, similar to the case of Jews in Spain, economics played a major factor in the designation of race. One must also take into consideration that although labor was a major factor in the way the inquisition judged Natives, its exclusion as a public tool for murder has its roots, as we have seen, in the 16th century. In other words, although treatment of Jews may have served as a basis for the judgment of Natives, the Peninsular recognition of their colonized bodies defined the way Natives were to be treated and judged.

One of the most important things one must distinguish, and therefore be careful of, is the fact the condition of Natives as the new victims of the inquisition was heavily contained in their skin color. Sartre, in *Anti Semite and Jew*, speaks of a reputation that

Press, 1999), 153

⁶⁹ Alejandro Caneque, "Writing and Representing the Auto de Fe in Colonial Mexico," *The Americas*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (Jan., 1996): 333

⁷⁰ Ibid.333 (Caneque 1996)

Jews must gain in order somehow to be a respected human in a particular society.⁷¹ Sartre also speaks of a phantom personality, “which is nothing but himself-himself as others see him.” The visible veil that constitutes the phantom personality of the Native was his/her color. A trait such as color could not be escaped; in fact, its diversity was used to create a hierarchic order in New Spain. Although there were many instances in which color was not a determining factor of an individual’s status, it is nonetheless important to realize that in the case of the Native, similar to the Jewish phantom personality, color was always an influential—but not the only—factor that determined their status as colonized subjects.

In New Spain, a strict system of “blood cleansing” existed in the differentiation between Natives, nobles and various social ranks of colonial society. The hierarchical separations between colonizers and colonized people were enforced through a system called *limpieza de sangre* (blood cleansing): “Old Christian ancestry was to serve as a source of great pride for Spaniards and their descendants (creoles) in the New World, an index with which to measure themselves against the recently converted populations of the colonies.”⁷² This was a way to transfer the hatred against Jews and Muslims to the Americas.⁷³ The *limpieza de sangre* prevented the mixing of blood between Peninsulars and Muslims or Jews. The colonization of the Americas and the complicated *casta* system of New Spain added more layers to conception of contamination of blood.

The impurity of blood in New Spain was measured by the merging of religion and race. This mixing created a complex system of castes in which color became only one of

⁷¹ For the most part Sartre speaks Jews in France in the 20th century: Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Anti-Semite and Jew*. (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 74

⁷² Maria Elena Martinez, “Limpieza de Sangre.” In *Encyclopedia Mexico* by Michael S. Warner (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers), 750

many factors behind a person's lineage and blood purity. This confusion was used by many to escape being judged under the inquisition's jurisdiction. Many, despite their color, "claimed to be Indians in order to escape the Holy Office's jurisdiction."⁷⁴ Greenleaf assures that it was very complicated for accused Indians or Mestizos to obtain proof of their *limpieza de sangre*, and that "many hours of testimony before the Inquisition were needed prior to remanding the case of the ordinary."⁷⁵ Another example of this difficulty happened during a trial in Yucatan in 1674. According to Solange Alberro, the inquisitorial commissary of Yucatan was confronted with the case of three *Mulatos* who claimed to be Mayan: "in 1674 he saw three individuals that were considered *Mulatos* and idol worshipers that were imprisoned in Merida while waiting to be translated to Mexico. They started to speak Mayan and to wear indigenous clothing, thus escaping the tribunal since they resulted to be Indians."⁷⁶ These types of cases in which the purity of blood became the center of inquisitorial jurisdiction prove that contemporary ideas of race and color are not applicable in a colonial setting. While color played a major role in the way the inquisition judged their victims, it was not the only aspect of an individual's lineage that was taken into consideration. The 16th century way of perceiving Natives had completely changed by the 18th century due, to a series of political and economic factors.

SBO and the 18th century

⁷³ Ibid. 751

⁷⁴ Richard Greenleaf, "The Inquisition and the Indians of New Spain: A Study in Jurisdictional Confusion," *The Americas* Vol. 22 No. 2 (October 1965): 149

⁷⁵ Richard Greenleaf, "The Inquisition and the Indians of New Spain: A Study in Jurisdictional Confusion," *The Americas* Vol. 22 No. 2 (October 1965): 149

⁷⁶ Alberro, Solange, *Inquisición y sociedad en México, 1571-1700* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988), 27. Original text reads: "en 1674, vio que tres individuos considerados mulatos y adoradores de

It is important to remember again that the real purpose of this thesis is to pose questions and offer answers related to the subjects in the paintings. By revealing the historical background of Peninsulars and their perception of their colonized subjects, a layer of information is thus exposed regarding SBO. By now, I have touched upon the role that the inquisition played in the lives of Natives. Also, revealing the institution's history in Spain prior to 1574 exposes the ways in which the Holy Office intended to treat its newly encountered victims. Since the 16th century, the debate about how to treat the Native in terms of conversion and conquest ultimately influenced the procedures of the Novohispanic Inquisition. With this in mind, it is now correct to assume that the six victims on the stage in SBO were probably not killed or burned during or after the depicted ceremony. The debate on the rational capacity of the Native continued throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. Their role in society also changed, and knowledge of the role of Natives in 18th century Mexico will clarify questions about their social relations with those in power. In due course, such relations may have influenced not only the way the victims were pictorially portrayed in SBO, but also the way they were perceived in a public event such as an auto-de-fé.

Ilona Katzew in *Una Vision del Mexico del Siglo de las Luces, La Codificacion de Joaquin Antonio Basaras* explores some of the views that Peninsulars in New Spain had of the Natives of the Valley of Mexico. She argues that the debates of the 16th century, such as the one between las Casas and Sepulveda, continued throughout the 17th century. Katzew cites authors such as Carlos de Singuenza y Góngora, who expressed their hatred

ídolos, que estaban encarcelados en Mérida mientras esperaban el traslado a México, empezaron a hablar maya y a ponerse ropa indígena, escapando de este modo el tribunal, puesto que resultaron ser indios.”

against Natives.⁷⁷ On the other hand, Katzew mentions Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, who in his writings highlighted the honesty, obedience, discretion, and elegance of Natives. The 17th century Natives discussed by these authors are different than the 16th century Indians defended by de las Casas. The Natives of both the 18th and 17th century had been well assimilated into New Spanish society. They belonged to an economic and political colonial system. For example, J. I. Israel, in *Race Class and Politics in Colonial Mexico 1610-1670*, discusses the fact that Native labor in the 17th century was the cheapest. Simultaneously, “the Indians of central and Southern Mexico and the settled Indian colonies of the north, molded by centuries of sedentary existence, could be relied on for cheap, easily disciplined work gangs that would submit to virtually any conditions and drudgery.”⁷⁸ However, it is the Native presence in cities, such as Mexico City, that formed the basis for many of the opinions expressed in books such as Joaquin Antonio Basarás’ *Costumbres de Indios y Mapas de las Generaciones, y Algunas Frutas de Nueva España, que carecen en la Europa*.

Basarás’ pictorial depictions of Natives are individualized. However, the half-length portrait style used in his drawings highlights labor they performed. In the *Indio de Toluca* (Tolucan Indian. Fig.2), we see a repetitive pattern employed by Basarás throughout the entire book.⁷⁹ All Natives are shown in a painted baroque-like frame that encloses the figures in three quarters of a circle. Their ethnic group and the labor they execute in the picture are described by text in the bottom of the frame. Such thorough

⁷⁷Joaquín Antonio de Basarás, and Ilona Katzew. 2006. *Una visión del México del siglo de las luces: la codificación de Joaquín Antonio de Basarás : Origen, costumbres y estado presente de mexicanos y filipinos* (México, D. F.: Landucci, 2006), 27

⁷⁸ Jonathan I. Israel, *Race, class, and politics in colonial Mexico, 1610-1670* (Oxford historical monographs. London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 25.

depictions directly contradict the generalized depictions of Natives found in SBO. Nevertheless, Basarás depicts detailed portraits with the main intention of highlighting the Natives' labor. While SBO omits a detailed portrait of Natives in order to favor the hegemonic performance of an *auto*, Basaras favors it in order to undermine their nature. His representation of Natives lacks the poetic lyricism seen in the work of artists such as Miguel Cabrera. In his *casta* series, Cabrera portrays Natives in their daily life in a manner that draws attention to their economic role in society and their participation in family affairs. Instead, Basarás shows us inane subjects that appear to stare at nothing. Although their labor is emphasized, the lack of personality and lost gaze reflects the way Basarás depicts Natives' subjectivity in his writings. Basarás, in Lewis Hanke's terms, belonged to the "dirty dog" school of thought. His artistic work thus becomes a reflection on the way Natives continued to be perceived by many privileged members of society in 18th century New Spain.

In Basarás' book, we see an example of the type of documentation and artwork created for the European viewer. The depictions, both pictorial and descriptive, were created to inform a specific viewer about the nature of the Native. Among the descriptions by Basarás and Siguenza we see their reproof against Native "alcoholism and laziness." Natives' "rudeness" and other negative qualities are never reflected upon as the result of a hundred years of repression. Basarás mentions Native resentment against the Spanish, but does not use it to justify their "rudeness." Instead, Native resentment of their colonization is seen as sign of ungratefulness towards the, "difficult task of the colonizers to convert and civilize those towns from their ignorance, paganism, and

⁷⁹ I opted to use the picture of the Indio de Toluca since the victims of SBO belonged to the region of

seditionness.”⁸⁰ The experiences lived by Basarás directly affect the content of his depictions. Moreover, Basarás “directly reprimands Palafox-and Las Casas-for defending Indians by letting their judgment be taken more by their religious devotion than by experience.”⁸¹ Once again, the nature of Natives is measured in terms of experience with either Indian affairs or religion. By the 18th century, the rational capabilities of Natives were not informed by their resistance to conversion, but by their devotion. Such devotion is contested and punished in autos-de-fé, and Natives such as the victims of SBO were judged with the same standard used to measure their rationality.

Chapter Conclusions

In this chapter I have attempted to illustrate the history of the social relations behind the hegemonic forces that controlled autos-de-fé and their victims on both sides of the Atlantic. By showing the development of the Spanish and Novohispanic Inquisition victims, I was able to compare and contrast the problems such relations had on both sides of the Atlantic. While there may be many similarities between the way the inquisition treated its victims in the Americas and in the Iberian Peninsula, the differences are factors that had a major impact on the history of the Novohispanic Inquisition. The cruelty exercised during the 16th century against Natives in New Spain, as well as the system of categorization used to describe their capacity to convert, both had their roots in the way Jews were persecuted in Europe.

Toluca. The next chapter provides more information on this topic.

⁸⁰Joaquín Antonio de Basarás, and Ilona Katzew. 2006. *Una visión del México del siglo de las luces: la codificación de Joaquín Antonio de Basarás : Origen, costumbres y estado presente de mexicanos y filipinos* (México, D. F.: Landucci, 2006), 28

⁸¹ Ibid. 27. Original text reads: “amonesta directamente a Palafox-y a Las Casas- por defender a los indios, dejándose llevar más por el celo religioso que por la experiencia.”

In both instances, there were many political reasons involving the structure of the Hispanic territories as a forming nation. The inquisition aimed to unify the people through Catholicism, while publicly utilizing violence to enforce authority. In Europe, the Peninsulars categorized Jews according to their religious practices. In addition, their perception of Jews was altered according to the economic context in which Jews were persecuted. In New Spain, it was the incapacity and unwillingness to convert to Catholicism that defined the way Natives were both treated and perceived. Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, the negative perception of Natives continued to fuel their unprivileged role in New Spanish Colonial societies. SBO, through its formal components, serves as a mediated representation in which to observe and analyze this complicated Novohispanic colonial structure. It is in the absence of documentation, and in the differences between social models, where I begin to pose the questions that are the basis of this project.

Chapter 2

A Formal Approach to Autos-de-fé as Performance and Pictorial Genre.

Un Auto-de-fe en el Pueblo de San Bartolome Oztolotepec

As noted in the introduction, paintings of autos-de-fé represent some of the most uncommon scenes ever depicted on either side of the Atlantic. Unlike the spectacle itself, the paintings illustrating the inquisitorial ceremony were not intended to be viewed by everybody. Despite the paucity of oil paintings, many written records have survived describing in detail the nature of autos-de-fé both in Spain and in the territories of New Spain. These distinctive images restate the supremacy of the Church and the viceroyalty, along with their primary role as conductors of these public performances. Paintings such as *Un auto-de-fé en el pueblo de San Bartolomé Oztolotepec* demonstrate an impressive display of power wielded by the inquisition. Also, SBO leaves the spectators out of the text inscribed in the painting, preferring to acknowledge only the ceremony's organizers and elite guests. Further, instead of identifying the individual to be executed, auto-de-fé images highlight the members of the Church and the royalty. The disjunction created by such disparate foci can perhaps be explained by considering the painted images in a wider context. For whom were these paintings created, and what was their main purpose? Depicting an event that took place outside of México City, *Un auto-de-fé en el pueblo de San Bartolomé Oztolotepec* provides a good basis for understanding the purpose of pictorially recording autos-de-fé, as well as the role of the inquisition in México.

Even without prior knowledge of the subject matter, a viewer looking at paintings such as SBO acquires a sense of the collective nature of these spectacles. The main goal of an auto-de-fé was to confront the sins of heretics and to publicly announce their

penance. In some cases, the *autos* were followed by punishing prisoners through flagellation and killing them by burning in public parks and plazas. People from all levels of society can be identified in SBO. Differences in attire provide a clue to people's rank within viceregal society. Observing the variety of costumes can lead the viewer's eye to the center of what was in reality the focus of the ceremony. Although one may not be able to deduce to what Indigenous group the six prisoners belonged, I must point out that, given the region where the SBO *auto* probably took place, the Natives portrayed may have been of Nahua origin. Caterina Pizzigoni, in "Como Frágil Y Miserable: Las Mujeres Nahuas del Valle de Toluca," points out, "before the conquest, the Otomi, Mazahua, and Matlatznica were numerous, but by the time of the contact with the Spanish the Nahuas had occupied the valley imposing their language, customs, becoming the dominant group."⁸² SBO may be considered an illustration of inquisitorial public performance, involving the Nahua outside Mexico City. A closer look at the characters' dress and actions reveals more details about the nature of these public events.

Dressed in *sambenitos*, the garments worn by prisoners in autos-de-fé, the group of six convicted heretics in SBO stand with their backs to the viewer as if ashamed of what they have just been accused of. The *sambenitos* were an important part of this ritual, since in many cases the garments were "decorated" with the committed sin. The symbolism of the *sambenito* in autos-de-fé was borrowed from the Bible. According to Antonio M. Garcia-Molina, such symbolism dates back to the Old Testament story of King Ahab, who

⁸² The original text reads as follows: "Antes de la conquista, los grupos otomí, mazahua y matlatznica eran muy numerosos, pero al momento del contacto con los Españoles los nahuas habían ocupado el valle imponiendo su idioma y sus costumbres y se habían transformado en el grupo dominante." Caterina Pizzigoni, "Como Frágil Y Miserable": Las Mujeres Nahuas del Valle de Toluca," in *Historia de la vida*

decided to wear a sack cloth as a symbol of penitence for having stolen Nabot's vineyard.⁸³ Garcia-Molina explains that the wearing of *sambenitos* as a form of penitence in the Catholic Church is considered "very old;" its use and form have gone through changes over the course of many years. Nonetheless, its basic use as a tunic over a penitent's clothes continued throughout the period of the inquisition in New Spain.

The *sambenito*'s main purpose was to make public the prisoner's shame before, during, and, many times, after the conclusion of the *auto*. In Mexico, as explained by Garcia-Molina Riquelme, the rules in regards to the *sambenito* were followed with special care. The care was such that in 1577, "a little bit after the installation of the tribunal, the inquisitors were busy recuperating the *sambenitos* of various reconciled prisoners between 1528 and 1574; the years in which the tribunal was constituted."⁸⁴ The Novohispanic inquisitors decided to recuperate such *sambenitos*, given that traditionally, their display was to be made public through local churches. In this manner, the local population was provided with a perpetual visual symbol of the victims' sins. In addition, the inquisitors were reminded of their duty as perpetuators of the offenders' public shame.⁸⁵ The use of the *sambenito* had an important meaningful role in the prisoner's civic dishonor, even after the sentencing was made official.

cotidiana en México : tomo III: El siglo XVIII : entre tradición y cambio, ed. Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México ; Fondo de Cultura Económica 2005), 292.

501.

⁸³ Garcia Molina Riquelme, Antonio M. *El Régimen de Penas Y Penitencias en el tribunal de la Inquisición de México*,(México: Universidad Nacional Autonoma de México, 1999), 539

⁸⁴ The original text reads as follows: Tanto así que en el año 1577, apoco de instaurado el tribunal, los inquisidores se ocuparon en reponer los sambenitos de varios reconciliados entre el año 1528 y 1574, en que se constituyó el tribunal. Garcia Molina Riquelme, Antonio M. *El Régimen de Penas Y Penitencias en el tribunal de la Inquisición de México*,(México: Universidad Nacional Autonoma de México, 1999), 542-543

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 542

Those who were condemned to die by burning because of the severity of their sins were referred to as *relajados* (sentenced to death). According to Victoria Gonzalez de Caldas, the soon to be executed would wear a *sambenito* decorated with flames and snakes, and in less severe cases, their penitence was revealed by the double red swords of San Andres on the front of their garment.⁸⁶ Alejandro Cañeque, in his essay “Theatre of Power: writing and representing the Auto-de-fé in colonial México,” explains how on many occasions the *sambenito* was to be worn for life, extending the prisoner’s penitence beyond the auto-de-fé.⁸⁷

In the publication created for the exhibit, *Diego Rivera y la Inquisicion*, Alicia Gojman de Backal wrote an essay entitled “Inquisicion en la Nueva Espana.” In this essay, Gojman de Backal explains, among many other historical facts about the Novohispanic Inquisition, some of the procedures for autos-de-fé. Her interpretation includes a brief discussion about *sambenitos*;

People sentenced to wear the sambenito as perpetual habit around the streets, some with real impudence.-says Riva Palacio-that from there came to México the phrase to make “finery of the sambenito” when a person shows to get satisfaction out of something that should produce him/her embarrassment. Father Molina refers to it pondering the facility that Indians have to imitate, that after seeing so many reconciled with very well made and very well painted sambenitos, they begun coping them and selling them to the Spanish who valued them and wore it during Easter.”⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Victoria Gonzalez de Caldas, *El Poder y su Imagen; La Inquisición Real* (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, Secretariado de Publicaciones, (2001), 229

⁸⁷ Caneque, “Theatre of Power: writing and representing the Auto-de-fé in colonial México,” *The Americas*, Vol 52, No. 3 (1996): 326

⁸⁸ Alicia Gojman de Backal, “Inquisición en la Nueva España.” In *Diego Rivera y la inquisición: un puente en el tiempo* by Rivera, Diego, and Carmen Gaitan Rojo (Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2008), 84. The original text reads: “La sentencia a habito perpetuo por las calles con el sambenito, algunos con tal descaro-dice Riva Palacio-que de ahí vino en México la frase de hacer “gala del sambenito” cuando alguna persona da muestra de tener a satisfacción l que debiera causarle rubor. Refiere el Padre Molina, ponderando la facilidad que tenían los indios para imitar, que al ver tantos reconciliados con sambenito muy

In this quote we see how Natives re-appropriated an institutional symbol of hegemonic control. They completely changed *sambenitos*' meaning and importance as inquisitorial ceremonial objects. Instead, the *sambenito* became a profitable object whose original meaning over time may have lost its significance. The reasoning behind the use of *sambenitos* as lucrative objects may have several implications. Gojman de Backal concludes her brief discussion by explaining that the use of *sambenitos* outside of *autos* became such a joke that the phrase used to sell them, *tie cohuasnequi sambenito*, (do you want to sell a sambenito?) became a proverb in Spain; *tique quis benito*.⁸⁹ The idea of the *sambenito* being sold by Natives as a form of defiance or as a political commentary is hard to verify, since next to no writing on this issue has appeared. Nonetheless, the fact that such a powerful institutional object was re-appropriated by the Natives of central New Spain shows how their behavior, in relation to *autos*, goes beyond their expected participation as spectators or victims. In fact, the sale of *sambenitos* demonstrates that Native conduct in *autos*, while being the product of colonial hegemonic control, also shows another aspect of the so-called nature of Natives. Perhaps this attitude demonstrates a perspective on Native subjectivity that people like Basarás and Sepulveda were not able to recognize. Besides the obligatory use of *sambenitos*, the accused heretics carried long white candles and wore *corozas*, or canonical hats, which distinguished them from the rest of the spectators.

According to Garcia-Molina, long white candles, such as the ones observed with the prisoners on the right side of the SBO's stage, symbolize faith and the true light of

bien hechos y muy bien pintados los copiaron y empezaron a vender como ropa que los españoles estimaban y debían usar en la cuaresma.”

⁸⁹ Ibid. 84

Jesus Christ. Each offender was to carry one of these candles as a symbol of faith throughout the *auto*. The candles were to remain unlit until the prisoner was officially abjured.⁹⁰ However, the prominent candles observed among the SBO group of seated Natives directly to the right of the prisoners on stage may reveal the source of their wrongdoings. Garcia-Molina indicates that those who carried a candle without a *coroza* were charged with the *abjuración de vehementi*.⁹¹ Vehement abjuration refers to the offense of being highly suspected of heresy or unorthodox opinion. While the seated Native group with candles and lack of *corozas* may disclose the reason for their appearance in SBO the dress of the group of prisoners in the center of the composition may expose another type of inquisitorial violation.

Garcia-Molina explains the use of the *coroza* and its different forms according to the committed sin, which in SBO may serve as another indication of the offenders' transgressions. For example, the *corozas* of bigamists were decorated with images of a man between two, and at times, three women.⁹² Offenders guilty of superstition generally wore plain white *corozas*, which sometimes displayed the sin committed.⁹³ The *corozas* in SBO are white with no visible pictorial indication whatsoever. The white *coroza* may be a sign of their condemnation for superstition, and in the case of the two women in the middle of the group, for witchcraft. In SBO, *corozas* lead the eye to the center of the composition, creating the notion that attention should be placed on the accused Indians. Once the text is read, the eye of the viewer may then start moving away from the center of

⁹⁰ García Molina Riquelme, Antonio M. *El Régimen de Penas Y Penitencias en el tribunal de la Inquisición de México*, (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1999), 538.

⁹¹ Ibid. 538

⁹² Ibid. 535-536

⁹³ Ibid. 535

the painting in order to acknowledge the presence of members of the Church and local political figures. But before fully analyzing the painting's text, an overview of the Novohispanic Inquisition and its procedures must be established.

The Novohispanic Inquisition

One of the already established notions about the auto-de-fé is that its main purpose was to create respect for inquisition laws as well to display a sense of authority within the community. As noted in the previous chapter, the inquisition was a Spanish institution established in 1480 for the purpose of consolidating the emerging Catholic state. Its main purpose was to maintain “Catholic purity between the Spanish, to persecute false converts and to detect any outbreak of heresy or deviation –accidental or conscious–from the Christian dogmas.”⁹⁴ The inquisition, or Tribunal of the Faith, was an institution run by both the Church and the royalty. In fact, it was controlled by the king with the approval of the Pope. In his essay, “The Auto-de-fé: Ritual and Imagery,” Francisco Bethencourt explains how the Pope's participation in the inquisition was limited to the confirmation and the consecration of the person nominated as Inquisitor-General.⁹⁵ The hierarchy of the inquisition was topped by graduates in canon law and by the *familiares*, or appointed privileged members. District tribunals around Spain were established in order to control minor centers outside of Madrid. This prototype was re-established in the colonies on the other side of the Atlantic.

In New Spain, the letter containing the proclamation from King Philip II to establish an office of the *Santa Inquisición* was dictated in January 25, 1569. The

⁹⁴ Gabriel Torres Puga, *Los Ultimos Años de la Inquisición en la Nueva España*, (México, D.F.: Miguel Angel Porrúa: CONACULTA-INAH, 2004), 15

inquisition was established in 1571, and by 1574, the first *auto* was celebrated. The letter sent to the viceroy Martín Enríquez de Almazá explains the purpose of the inquisition in New Spain as well as the intentions against those who challenged the holy laws. For example, Philip II recognized the rise of Christianity due to the tremendous expansion of the Spanish empire and indirectly acknowledged the evangelization of the newly conquered lands. His letter also stressed the existence of heretics, which tended to damage the purity of religion:

: ...and as we have some notice and experience that the real remedy to all these ill damages and inconveniences consists on divert and exclude of all the communication of the heretics and suspicions in the doctrine of our catholic faith, punishing and extirpating their mistakes and heresies with the rigor that the sacred canons disposed, as well as with the laws of our kingdoms⁹⁶

The proclamation of King Philip II gives us an idea about the invention of the *auto-de-fé* and the reason for its performance in the public realm. In other words, not only did application of the law in public aim to correct prisoners but, in order to prohibit the propagation of “false religious practices,” *autos-de-fé* also aimed to create massive spectacles. Another form of law enforcement existed between 1521 and 1571, prior to the establishment of the Novohispanic Inquisition.

An Episcopal inquisition operated in the Americas prior to the years of the establishment of a formal Novohispanic Inquisition: “On April 10, 1521, Pope Leo X granted to the Franciscan Order the right to perform as a secular clergy in areas where

⁹⁵ Francisco Bethencourt, “The Auto-de-fé: Ritual and Imagery,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courland Institutes* No. 55 (1992): 156

⁹⁶ The original text reads as follows: ...y como se tenga tan cierta noticia y experiencia que el verdadero remedio de todos estos males, daños y inconvenientes consiste en desviar y excluir del todo la comunicación de las personas heréticas y sospechas en la doctrina de nuestra fe católica, castigando y extirpando sus errores y herejías con el rigor que disponen los sagrados cánones y las leyes de nuestros

there were no priests or bishops. Pope Adrian VI, by the bull *Exponi nobis* (known in New Spain as the *Omnimoda*) of May 10, 1522, extended to prelates of all mendicant orders in America the right to exercise almost all Episcopal powers...⁹⁷ This meant that all mendicant orders had special permission to execute their will on the Natives of many regions of New Spain. Most of the cases against Natives dealt with issues of sorcery, blasphemy, false idolatry, and in some areas, sacrifice. Bishop Juan de Zumarraga, and later Visitor General Francisco Tello de Sandoval, served as apostolic inquisitors before the formal creation of the inquisition in New Spain. As explained by Greenleaf, inquisitorial documents of the 16th century reveal the ways in which many Natives resisted the spiritual conquest of the Peninsulars.⁹⁸ Prior to 1571, many trials against Natives concluded with execution, as in the case of one of the first Native trials of 1525, in which four Natives were killed.⁹⁹

In small provinces outside Mexico City, testimonies ranged from *autos* against Native statuary to severe forms of public punishment. For example, in 1560, a Dominican friar severely punished a Native for the crime of human sacrifice. According to Greenleaf, the Dominican priest held a public ceremony where four Natives were whipped and severely hurt: "Then the priest ordered four stakes erected in the plaza of the village, had the culprits tied to the stakes on their knees, and piled up wood so that bundles of ritual paraphernalia used in sacrifices-plumes, masks and other implements-

reinos.... José Toribio Medina, *Historia del Tribunal del Santo Oficio de la Inquisición en México*. (México: Ediciones Fuente Cultural; [distribuidores exclusivos: Librería Navarra, 1952), 43-44.

⁹⁷ Richard E. Greenleaf, "The Inquisition and the Indians of New Spain: A Study in Jurisdictional Confusion." (*The Americas Vol. 22 No. 2*, October 1965), 138

⁹⁸ Richard E. Greenleaf, "The Mexican Inquisition and the Indians: Sources for the Ethnohistorian." (*The Americas Vol. 34 No. 3*, Jan. 1978), 319

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 322

might be publicly burned.”¹⁰⁰ The lack of restrictions on the killing of Natives would later be controlled once the official Novohispanic Inquisition was established. It seems as if the friars in charge of the spiritual conquest of New Spain, who had inquisitorial powers, had only the procedures of the Spanish Inquisition as a basis from which to formulate and implement their religious doctrines.

Many Dominican friars were later brought to trial. These trials played an essential role in the way Natives were to be treated by the Inquisition: “These scandalous occurrences, along with a celebrated series of Franciscan persecutions of the Maya in Yucatan, began to condition attitudes at the Council of Indies towards mendicant authority over Indian transgression as well as the viability of Episcopal Inquisitions in sixteenth-century Mexico.”¹⁰¹ Later, in 1571, during the first official year of the inquisition in New Spain, the separation of Native cases and their management under Bishopric power was established.¹⁰² This separation in inquisitorial jurisdiction creates a level of confusion when looking at SBO. Why were Natives judged in a manner very similar to the way Jews and other groups were judged? Although there is no clear explanation for Native *autos*, I believe that such public manifestations of power were very effective for the population and consequently were performed outside of the official jurisdiction of the Novohispanic Inquisition. Also, although the Provisory of Indians was

¹⁰⁰ Richard E. Greenleaf, "Persistence of Indian Values: The Inquisition and the Indians of Colonial Mexico." (The Americas Vol. 50 No. 3, Jan. 1994), 369

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 370

¹⁰² Although there was a separation, the Inquisition still oversaw all the procedures of the Native trials.

separate from the Novohispanic Inquisition, they tended to emulate the practices of the Spanish Inquisition such as autos.¹⁰³

Most of the written accounts that we have of Spanish autos-de-fè deal with cases of accused *Conversos*, but in New Spain, most of the accounts take on a different cultural connotation.¹⁰⁴ Other than *Conversos* and *Marranos*, the inquisition in New Spain tended to castigate baptized people of color, such as mulattoes and black people. In many cases, ceremonies involving white prisoners concluded in murder, while those involving mulattoes or black people were resolved with hundreds of lashes of the whip, but not, nonetheless, with killing.. Indians rarely died during or after autos-de-fè. As noted in the text of SBO, Indians were presided over by the “*juez provisorio y vicario general de los naturales*.”¹⁰⁵ Joseph Lanciego Aguilas is the judge who is noted in SBO’s text as the provisory vicar; he was also appointed archbishop in 1714.¹⁰⁶ The judge was part of a Provisory of Indians that controlled and punished the religious offenses of indigenous people of a designated geographical area. David Tavarez in “Idolatry as Ontological Question” mentions how although the cases of Native Idolatry was exclusive to ecclesiastical jurisdiction, some town mayors and district governors presided over Natives in the Diocese of Mexico and Oaxaca.¹⁰⁷ As noted by SBO with the number 6, the

¹⁰³ This is a point made by John Chuchiak in the 2010 RMCLAS panel I presented on the Novohispanic Inquisition.

¹⁰⁴ Jewishness is treated in this thesis as a cultural and religious category. Nativeness is also used more as a cultural trait since race in New Spain, as explained in chapter 1, was not defined only by color or ethnic group.

¹⁰⁵ “Judge provisory and general vicar of the naturals”

¹⁰⁶ Archidiócese of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, “History.” Archidiocese of Mexico-Tenochtitlan. <http://www.arquidiocesismexico.org.mx/Ingles/About%20us.html> (accessed: February 2010).

¹⁰⁷ David Tavarez, “Idolatry as Ontological Question.” (Journal of Early Modern History Vol.5 No.2, 2002) 120-121

Corregidor or district governor assisted to the auto and may also have been involved in the legal procedures.

Among the offenses, bigamy and false idolatry were the most common. Although official trials against Indians were not as “common” as those against *Conversos*, records exist proving that the very first trial in México was celebrated against an Indian in 1522.¹⁰⁸ Similarly to Blacks and Mulattoes, Indians were never sentenced to death, and their penalties, no matter how big their sins, never reached burning scaffolds. Indians were punished through flagellation in public to create visible signs of the impurity of their bodies, colors and souls.

As noted in the last chapter, Cañeque explains how the bodies of Blacks, Mulattoes, and Indians signified labor, while in the case of the white body, it was the soul that had to be preserved.¹⁰⁹ In other words, supported by the notion that in colonial Mexico skin color provided an easy way to discriminate between and create cultural differences, Cañeque explains why the Indian body was valued over the white body, which was to be destroyed in order to save the soul. With this information in mind, it is easier to understand why SBO includes no scaffolds or signs of what is to happen after the inquisitor, or provisory judge, pronounces sentences on the six Indians in the middle of the composition. The absence of a complete account that includes the sins and sentencing of SBO’s victims is exactly what separates this image from the rest of the written narratives of autos-de-fé.

¹⁰⁸ Richard E. Greenleaf. “The Inquisition and the Indians of New Spain: A Study in Jurisdictional Confusion.” *The Americas*, 22, No. 2 (1965): 139

¹⁰⁹ Alejandro Cañeque, “Theatre of Power: writing and representing the Auto-de-fé in colonial México,” *The Americas* 52, No3 (1996): 333. Homi K. Bhabha’s argument is based on the idea that the difference on color in the diversified viceregal society was the main object of discrimination, inferiority and degeneracy.

The Text

Text and image in SBO, like in most colonial pictorial production, cannot be separated; they must be seen as integrated. The dynamics between text and image must be analyzed in order to understand the context of a piece in question. Again, if we eliminate the text, the composition of SBO can be interpreted only according to the eye of the viewer. Without text, the prisoners become principal characters, while inquisitorial members vanish to the sides and into the background of the composition. But as the viewer reads the text on both the upper left and the lower parts of the painting, the principal characters of this auto-de-fé become the center of attention. The text in the upper left directly indicates the physical placement of those who must be the most honorable invitees. The text in the lower part describes the event and announces the title of some of the most important invitees, such as the vicar judge who presided over this important event.¹¹⁰

Nowhere in the text has the painter acknowledged the presence of either the assistants or the prisoners in the middle of the composition. The importance given to provisory members by identifying their names and titles is denied to the prisoners, whose individuality is completely forgotten. Prior to any conclusions, the viewer must understand that in any image, artists and patrons abide by certain decisions. What we see now is the product of those decisions; our job as critical viewers is to try to understand the reasons behind those possible decisions. Understanding the purpose of an auto-de-fé as an image subject may help understand some of the pictorial decisions behind paintings like SBO.

See Homi K. Bhabha's "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination, and the Discourse of Colonialism" in his *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994)

Proper documentation relating to the *auto* presented in SBO is very scarce. The Mexican National Archives (AGN) online do not indicate the existence of any document related to an *auto* of February 23 of 1716. However, the *Bibliografía Mexicana de El Siglo XVIII* includes two *autos* celebrated against Natives in small provinces outside Mexico City. One narrative describes an *auto* celebrated in the distant regions of what today is the state of Nayarit; the other took place in Tlamanalco in the Province of Chalco.¹¹¹ Both accounts describe the participation and punishment of Natives of the respective regions. Also, both accounts begin by describing the presence of the judges who presided over the *auto*; similar to SBO, these accounts acknowledge some of the most important members of the Provisory of Natives. For example, the account narrating the *auto* of Chalco includes a list of the priests who participated in the live event. However, only near the end of the small description is the role of the Natives acknowledged. No names are mentioned, and only a very quick description of the sins is related. This contradicts other

¹¹⁰ The original portion of the text reads: Auto-de-fé celebrated in the parochial church of *de S. Bartolome osolotepec* the day of February the 23rd of 1716

¹¹¹The auto description translation reads as followed: “The same day 23. It was celebrated in the parochial church of Santiago (which is the principal of the Indians) auto de fe, to which participated presiding Dr. D. Miguel de Aldave, Roxo de Vera, Provisory, and Vicar general of the Indians, and Chinese of this archbishopric, the notaries and ministers of its court, the RR.PP Priests of the remaining parochies, governments, justices, and fiscals of all the partialities of the Indians; in it they left to public penitence three Indians, and the statue of another, neighbors of the Town of Nebuelampa, the Doctrine of Tzacnaltipan in the Sierra Alta of Meztitlan, for superstitious sorcerers; female Indian of Real de Omitian, for Deceived, Folk Medicine, liar; another of this city for duplicity of matrimony; and an Indian also from here for the same crime; they were condemned to auto, in the form of penitents, with corresponding insignias to their crimes, and a headline that it implicated them, green candles and abjuration of levi rope, *tustigacion* in the church’s door of the church, use of the doctrine, healthy penitence, medicinal, spiritual, and reclusion to regular convents, and the females to hospitals and concentrations, for the time expressed by the sentence. Also, it was condemned to an auto of combustion (an the sentence was executed) a skeleton of a principal and most venerable idol of the Nayaritans, adorned with several jewels proper of its ferocity, and some painted by the human blood of sacrifices to which it was accused; which was sent to the excellent Senor Virrey, D. Manuel Joseph de Carranza y Guzman, Captain of the preside of San Francisco Xavier with historical relation to R.P. Urbano de Cobarrubias, of the Compania de Jesus, in which the triumphs of the faith are described, and the destruction and annihilation of different idols and temples that the Barbarians of the distant province had.” Nicolás León, *Bibliografía mexicana del siglo XVII*, Toronto. The University of Toronto. <http://www.archive.org/details/bibliografamex02leuoft>.

elaborate 17th century accounts in which many details of the *auto* are described. Although there is no official explanation, I believe that the small descriptions may have been due to the relatively small size of the *autos*. Even so, the descriptions acknowledge in some way the presence of Natives and their sins. This is a detail that, as noted before, is completely ignored in paintings of autos-de-fé.

Furthermore, the narratives observed in the bibliography and the texts of SBO seem to follow a very similar pattern. The two written accounts, along with the text of SBO, begin their description with the date of the *auto*. Immediately, the name of the city or/and region is acknowledged, followed by the names of the members of the Provisory of Indians and priests who participated in one way or another in the event. Looking at the similar pattern of narration in SBO and in the two 18th century *autos* of the *Mexican Bibliography*, I can reach yet another conclusion about SBO's text: It was most likely copied directly from official accounts onto the bottom portion of the painting. However, the artist, instead of transcribing the entire official narrative of the *auto*, including the victims' sins, may have opted to describe only the date, place, and presence of important members of the Church.

The sins found in the two 18th century accounts correlate with what was earlier observed in the analysis of the *corozas* and *sambenitos*. Among these offenses we found the crime of superstition and abuses of "banal observance." The *auto* of Nayarit included a statue of an idol that was cremated at the end of the event. In this *auto*, similar to the one illustrated in SBO, the presence of women is recognized. One female victim was accused of bigamy and another of being *ilusa curandera* and *embustera* (deceived, folk

medicine practitioner, and liar). Their punishment involved seclusion in a hospital for a specific amount of time. The described penitence observed in this account corresponds to that noted in other sources, which also describe the variety of punishments applied to Natives throughout the entire colonial period.

The Live Event

Autos-de-fè originally started as private events performed inside inquisitorial centers. They quickly gained the public and spectacular aspects of religious festivals, such as *Corpus Christi* and the entrance of the viceroy. In Spain, according to Francisco Bethencourt, the size and spectacular aspects of autos-de-fè grew with the persecution of Jews, who, after being converted to Christianity, were largely accused of maintaining their old beliefs. One reason *autos* enlarged to such an extent in the Americas was that the newly conquered territories were much larger than Spain, and sometimes visitors came from Central America, New Mexico, and also from the Philippines to observe such elaborate productions. In addition, the size of the territories of New Spain—six times larger than Spain—indicated that the inquisition’s effort to create and maintain a Catholic state must have been greater than ever before.

Traditionally, *autos* took place in major urban centers, such as México City, Lima, and Seville. The stage built outside the church of *San Bartolome de Otzolotepec* emulated the traditional structure of stages used for major Spanish autos-de-fè¹¹². Bethencourt breaks down the layout of the stage into three main components. First, “benches of infamy” were filled by the prisoners. Second, “benches of honor,” for inquisitors and royal guests, were placed opposite the “benches of infamy.” The center

platform, where the accused stood to hear their sentences, was the third and most important part of the elaborate stage.¹¹³ The platform's increase in size over time reflected more than the persecution of the Spanish and American Jewish communities; it also reflected the inquisition's need to make a public statement of authority. Mathias Bocanegra, in his narrative of the great *auto* of 1649, provides a detailed account of stage construction. Among the most striking details, Bocanegra describes the funds provided by the inquisition and the size, materials used, and capacity of the stage. His description proves the amount of attention devoted to creating an unforgettable spectacle that fulfilled the inquisition's intentions. Adornments, which heightened the aesthetic of the overall project, included benches, pedestals, and small balustrades. The grandeur of such structures exceeded anything made before.¹¹⁴

Bocanegra also explains how the construction of this particular *auto*'s stage took around three months. This attention to organization reflects the importance the stage signified in the overall production of a live event. Likewise, creation of such grand ephemeral theatrical arenas in New Spain showed the impact the inquisition wanted to create on the general public. The stages where these performances or *autos* took place were strategically placed outside of churches or royal palaces. Together with the grandeur of the stage, the use of important buildings as backdrops for the *autos* offered an additional statement of power that the viewer had to assimilate. Considering the fact that the 1716 *auto* of *San Bartolomé Oztolotepec* took place outside of an inquisitorial center,

¹¹² The details of SBO's space will be described in the next chapter.

¹¹³ Francisco Bethencourt, "The Auto-de-fé: Ritual and Imagery," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* No. 55(1992): 157.

we can deduce the great importance given to each one of the *autos*, regardless of its location or the number of prisoners involved.

In her essay, “Mimesis of the Last Judgment: A Spanish Auto-de-fé,” Maureen Flynn argues that all the events involved in an *auto* were taken from passages of the *Last Judgment*. For example, prisoners who were pardoned were seated to the right of the inquisitor, while the convicted were seated to his left. This tradition follows Mathew’s Biblical account in which the sheep, who were to receive eternal life, sat to the right of the Lord, while the condemned goats sat to the left.¹¹⁵ Flynn bases his argument on accounts of autos-de-fé from Spain, but this iconography was also used in New Spain. SBO also shows these Last Judgment arrangements: the inquisitor or other primary person presides over the ceremony, with prisoners on his left and some of the most distinguished invitees on his right. Furthermore, St. John’s revelation declares condemnation to the lake of fire of those not listed in the book of life. Although not shown in this painting, this passage corresponds to the flames depicted on prisoners’ garments at other Novohispanic *autos*, as well as to the public burnings held immediately after such ceremonies.

Flynn supports his interpretation of Last Judgment iconography by naming several punishments presented in the apocalypse of St. Peter. Among the most horrific scenes are those in which sinners were hanged by their tongues. Also, St. Peter narrates that a woman was hung by her hair over boiling mire because of her adulterous behavior. In the

¹¹⁴ Mathias Bocanegra, *Jews and the Inquisition of Mexico: the Great auto-de-fé of 1649, as related by Mathias de Bocanegra*. Translated and edited, with notes, bibliography and introduction by Seymour B. Liebman. (Lawrence, KS. Coronado Press, 1974), 42.

same way that John describes those scenes to frightened readers of the Bible, autos-de-fè aimed to terrify viewers who were able to read the sins from the prisoner's garments. On most occasions, the public followed the processions to witness the punishments that were to be executed upon the sinful bodies.

Leaving from the palace of the inquisition, the procession of prisoners and *familiares* would arrive at the *Alameda* park or other important *plaza* where these autos-de-fé would take place. In the case of Mexico City, according to most of the accounts I consulted, the auto-de-fé procession started early in the morning. During and prior to this procession, which followed a strategic path past important religious and civic centers, the sinner was encouraged to repent. According to Alejandro Cañeque, the prisoners were always accompanied by two confessors, who encouraged their repentance; on many occasions, this happened in public. In fact, Cañeque argues that repentance was the climax of the *autos*, "...the most stirring scenes for the spectator occurred when prisoners who had been condemned to die finally repudiated their convictions...moments in which the soul escaped the horrors of eternal damnation."¹¹⁶ The public manifestation of repentance for sins against the Church, along with the application of punishments, fulfilled the purpose of autos-de-fè. When the community witnessed the triumph of "The Trinity" (the Church, the Crown and the Inquisition) in a live event, they felt a sense of fear similar to that which many readers obtained by reading apocalyptic passages in the Bible.

¹¹⁵ Maureen Flynn, "Mimesis of the Last Judgment: The Spanish Auto-de-fé." *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 22, no. 2 (1991): 288

¹¹⁶ Alejandro Cañeque, "Theatre of Power: writing and representing the Auto-de-fé in colonial México," *The Americas* 52, No. 3 (1996): 327

Spanish Predecessors

Un auto-de-fé en el pueblo de San Bartolomé Otzolotepec has come to us with very little information other than that provided by the text. Looking at other commissions of auto-de-fé paintings outside of New Spain can help us understand the reasons behind the commission of and artistic choices within SBO. Pictorial accounts of autos-de-fé include engravings and paintings that depicted various moments of such ceremonies. As mentioned before, *St. Dominic Conducting an Auto-de-fé*, by Pedro Berruguete, includes all parts of the ceremony: sentence, abjuration, and punishments. In the same manner that the auto-de-fé of *Otzolotepec* creates a hierarchy in the composition by acknowledging the principal characters through its text, the painting by Berruguete places the inquisitor on the top of the composition, while the prisoners are severely punished at the bottom. This may be because the painting was commissioned by the Grand Inquisitor Torquemada.¹¹⁷ In *The Spanish Inquisition*, Joseph Pérez comments that this commission was the first of many by Torquemada. This fact confirms for us the commonality of auto-de-fé paintings in Spain and the nature of their commissions. Furthermore, in *Judios o Cristianos: El Proceso de Fe Sancta Inquisitio*, Gonzáles de Calda acknowledges the production of a whole series of *auto* images in the 17th century to establish pictorial proof of the Seville office's control over its several tribunals.¹¹⁸ Turning back to Berruguete's work, and considering its date, it is easy to understand why the victims are shown during their execution. Bethencourt points out that the last years of the 15th century represent the most violent phase of the Spanish Inquisition. *St. Dominic Conducting an Auto-de-fé*,

¹¹⁷ Joseph Perez, *La inquisicion espanola/ The Spanish Inquisition* (Martinez Roca S A Ediciones, 2006), 159

a painting considered to be the first of this rare genre, legitimizes this violent phase by referencing the inquisitorial activity of St. Dominic.¹¹⁹ In addition, the presence of St. Dominic is due to the fact that this piece formed part of an altar piece dedicated to the saint. *St. Dominic Conducting an Auto-de-fé* severely contrasts with future auto-de-fé paintings, which, through the use of birds-eye-views, tended to negate the individuality of the victims while empowering the institutions behind the ceremonies and the artwork.

Nearly two centuries separate Berruguete's piece from the next confirmed auto-de-fé painting in Spain. Created by Francisco Herrera, *Auto-de-fé en la Plaza de San Francisco* represents the second piece in this seemingly small genre. The time that elapsed between *St. Dominic Conducting an Auto-de-fé* and the Herrera composition seems to correlate with the difference in iconography apparent when comparing the paintings. *Auto-de-fé en la Plaza de San Francisco* was created in 1660 and commissioned by the Supreme council of the Spanish Inquisition to illustrate the auto-de-fé celebrated in Madrid in April of the same year.¹²⁰ The hierarchies in this painting are not created by placing the members of the Inquisition or the elite invitees in a privileged spot; instead, pictorial hierarchies exist among the prisoners according to the sins they have committed. The benches of infamy are placed on the right of the painting, constructed in the form of a pyramid to indicate the severity of the prisoners' sins. Maureen Flynn notes that in a 1559 auto-de-fé in Valladolid, Spain, the benches were arranged in this manner according to the level of the prisoners' guilt. This order

¹¹⁸ Victoria Gonzalez de Caldas. *Judios or Cristianos: El Proceso de Fe, Sancta Inquisitio*, (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, Secretariado de Publicaciones, (2000), 65

¹¹⁹Francisco Bethencourt, "The Auto-de-fé: Ritual and Imagery," *Journal of the Warburg and Courland Institutes*, No. 55 (1992): 163. The participation of St. Dominic in the creation of the Inquisition is a topic that will be further explored in a dissertation level.

highlights the position of *los relajados* on the top of the pyramid. With careful observation, one can distinguish the *corozas* of the prisoners contrasting with the costumes of the *familiares* (or personal confessors) that accompany them. A bird's-eye-view perspective helps the work of art negate the individuality of the victims. While the ceremony of auto-de-fé stresses the exposure of the prisoner's sins and elucidates their consequences in order to create anxiety within the population, the painting of Herrera avoids this kind of immediacy in favor of the elaborate nature of the spectacle. *Auto-de-fé en la Plaza de San Francisco* creates a formula in painting that is repeated by several artists within and outside of Spain.

Twenty years after the completion of Herrera's work, Francisco Rizi created what is perhaps the most recognized painting of an auto-de-fé. Resting in El Museo del Prado in Madrid, *Auto-de-fé en la Plaza Mayor* (ca.1680) celebrates the *auto* of June 30th, 1680. The painting continues the iconography first developed by Herrera in 1666.¹²¹ Francisco Rizi was able to capture the sumptuous nature of the occasion by recording in detail everything from the props used by the inquisition to the activities that took place outside the event. Besides the obvious difference in size between the *autos* of 1660 in Seville and 1680 in Madrid, both paintings are remarkably similar in their approach to the ceremony. The *Auto-de-fé en la Plaza de San Francisco* and *Auto-de-fé en la Plaza Mayor* create parallel compositions by using a bird's eye view and ignoring close-up details of the prisoners or of the audiences attending the ceremonies. Both artists avoid creating mythical figures of the prisoners, by ignoring compositional details. In other

¹²⁰ Victoria Gonzalez de Caldas. *El Poder y su Imagen; La Inquisición Real*, (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, Secretariado de Publicaciones, (2001), 237.

words, in order to avoid creating a martyr out of the victims, the artists do not place the attention on the prisoner nor on the audience's reactions to the events. After all, the myth they sought to create was around the authority of the inquisition, not around the victims' suffering.

Several reasons support the similar pictorial choices evident in the three pictures in this discussion: *Auto-de-fé en el Pueblo de San Bartolomé Otzolotepec*, *Auto-de-fé en la Plaza de San Francisco* and *Auto-de-fé en la Plaza Mayor*. Victoria Gonzalez de Caldas suggests that the main purpose of some of these paintings was to hang along the hallways of the Supreme Council of the Spanish Inquisition building. The commission for the 1660 Herrera painting specifically asked the artist to create a piece that recorded important *autos*. In addition, the commission requested a record of all the details, which would allow for a reading of what was happening in "other inquisitions."¹²² Moreover, Gonzáles de Caldas explains that the Spanish paintings followed a specific set of pictorial rules used to reflect with fidelity the solemn event.¹²³ The pictorial choices of the painters were fully manipulated by the Spanish Inquisition, resulting in a genre of painting that followed the needs and desires of a hegemonic institution. Although this type of information from the records related to SBO was not found, it is safe to speculate that its commission may have come from similar sources. For example, SBO follows the tradition imposed by Herrera in the Seville piece. Not only do we get a bird's-eye-view

¹²¹ Victoria Gonzalez de Caldas. *El Poder y su Imagen; La Inquisicion Real*, (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, Secretariado de Publicaciones, (2001), 237

¹²² Victoria Gonzalez de Caldas. *El Poder y su Imagen; La Inquisicion Real*, (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, Secretariado de Publicaciones, (2001), 237

¹²³ Victoria Gonzalez de Caldas. *Judios or Cristianos*, (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, Secretariado de Publicaciones, (2000), 64

instead of close-up details of the prisoners, but we also acquire a sense of the grandeur of the ceremony, even though it takes place outside of Madrid, Seville, or México City.

Gonzalez Caldas argues that these works reflect the state of the inquisition by the end of the seventeenth century. One of the details consistent in all three paintings is the activity outside of the stage, while the ceremony is taking place. For example, in SBO, we see people distracted, while on the bottom right of the composition, we catch a glimpse of a child playing with a dog. Furthermore, Rizi's composition from Madrid shows people leaving their benches, walking around, and involved in diverse activities. Similarly, Herrera depicts Spanish woman with their fans engaging in conversations while prisoners are being read their death sentences. Again, although the main reason for the ceremony's outdoor public development was to create a sense of fear in the local population, these paintings of auto-de-fé fail to cause this effect.

According to Gonzalez Caldas, this development only demonstrates how auto-de-fé in Spain became tedious and, "for the changing Baroque society, fond to be surprised by novelty in spectacle the liturgical ceremony of the auto-de-fé was in result ending tiresome and monotonous."¹²⁴ This last period of the Spanish Inquisition, and the pictorial record supporting it, contrasts dramatically with the late 15th century phase shown in Berruguete's painting. *St. Dominic Conducting an Auto-de-fé* not only concentrates on all parts of an *auto*, but also reflects the "justified" increasing activity against heretics. By the end of the seventeenth-century in Spain, the inquisition started to

¹²⁴ Victoria Gonzalez de Caldas. *El Poder y su Imagen; La Inquisicion Real*, (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, Secretariado de Publicaciones, 2001), 241. The original text reads: Ala cambiante sociedad del Barroco, aficionado en los espectaculos a dejarse sorprender con "novedades", la ceremonia liturgica del Auto-de-fé general terminaría resultándose cansada y monótona.

conduct autos-de-fé inside of sacred precincts. Besides the historical context that supports some of the artistic choices of this rare genre of painting, we must return to the prisoners in *Otzolotepec*.

Francisco Bethencourt in “The Auto-de-fé: Ritual and Imagery” argues that the painter of an auto-de-fé does not portrait the suffering, anxiety or repentance of the prisoner, in order to avoid creating a martyr out of him or her. Official inquisitorial images required the depiction of the triumph of “the trinity,” avoiding the possibility of creating conflicting ideas about the triumphant heretic, who, by being executed and tortured in public, became a kind of Christian martyr. In other words, if we make the prisoners of *Otzolotepec* turn around in so we can see their distress and fear, we may forget about the distinguished invitees, and therefore fail to remember the presence of the main provisory figures. Again, assuming typical Spanish auto-de-fé painting-commission as a basis for SBO, we can argue that one of the main purposes for the creation of this piece was to show the importance of *autos* in other places besides the main urban centers.

Bethencourt also contrasts these paintings with anti-Catholic Protestant images that emphasized the pain and sorrow of prisoners destined to die. Auto-de-fé Protestant images were created as a response to anti-Catholic treatises written during and around the Reformation years. One of the most important Protestant treatises, which aimed to de-sanctify the inquisition while stressing the self-interest behind the inquisitor and his followers, was written in Germany in 1567. This treatise was written by Antonio del Corro, a Peninsular Protestant who escaped the Spanish Inquisition¹²⁵. The importance of this treatise resides in the fact that not only did it include several images that de-sanctified

the inquisition, but it was also published in several languages, making its distribution larger than other English or German accounts. Similarly, several books were published in Germany and England with illustrations that, instead of concentrating on the privileged position of the inquisitors emphasized the negative conditions of *autos*' prisoners. Images that depicted the triumph of the Church thus possibly created a conflict with the Protestant focus on the triumph of heretics. Perhaps the only real purpose of these Protestant images was to denounce the injustices done to the inquisition prisoners, but the Catholic viewer may have understood these images as the martyrdom or sanctification of inquisition victims.

One of the best examples of “anti-*auto*” images is presented in a book written by the Frenchman, Pierre Paul Sevin.¹²⁶ Sevin’s account was later adapted to better illustrate the Spanish Inquisition. Also, Adrian Shoonebeeck created images for another Protestant publication, to illustrate an account of a Spanish auto-de-fé. Among the many images presented in this latter account, a group of three prints strike one as the complete opposite of auto-de-fé paintings (Fig. 6). Although no artist is revealed, the group of prints directly engages the viewer in the sorrow that the prisoners’ gazes strongly reveal. The artist who created these images leaves no room to show the majestic nature of the auto-de-fé or any indication of the ceremony at which these victims were to be sacrificed. Close-ups are substituted for the bird’s-eye-view, and the text directly acknowledges the prisoners as victims. Also, the artist bestows the prisoners with ethereal gazes that may be compared with European paintings of saints in a moment of divine revelation. In fact, the

¹²⁵ Francisco Bethencourt, “The Auto-de-fé: Ritual and Imagery,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtland Institutes*, No. 55 (1992): 165

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* 165

concept behind SBO and its negation of the individuality of the victims can be explained by referencing images of saints and virgins in ecstasy, which were very common in New Spain. Perhaps the obsession with creating an illustrated account that reflected the inquisition's power and authority stood in the way of the possible sanctification of its victims.¹²⁷

Chapter Conclusions

Un auto-de-fé en el pueblo de San Bartolomé Otzolotepec, while not focusing on what was happening in Mexico City, still belongs to a tradition of auto-de-fé paintings whose production began at the end of the 15th century in Spain. As we have seen, pictorial details were most likely manipulated by the *Provisorato de Indios* in order to continue the genre observed in other paintings in Spain. The pictorial manipulations stressed the power of the provisory in a small Novohispanic town. In order to do this, the artist, possibly following the instructions of the commissioner, ignored the individuality of the prisoners and privileged the presence of the inquisitor and the *familiares*. Ironically, it is through a close analysis of all the different pictorial details that we can begin to draw conclusions about the nature of the performance illustrated by SBO. A written account of the event seems to have been lost; nonetheless, a careful look at the structure of the painting's text discloses its similarities to other 18th century New Spanish *auto* official accounts. In the same way, an analysis of the way the artist depicts the *corozas*, *candles*

¹²⁷ An important pictorial example of Native portraiture of the 18th century is indicated in chapter 1. With the image of the Toluca Native by Basarás I confirm the notion that the detailed pictures illustrating Natives aim to subtract any element that may indicate their important role colonial society. SBO denied a detailed analysis of its victims in order to deny their possible roles as martyrs. On the other hand, Basarás opposes this notion by creating a detailed view of local Natives by highlighting their role as workers and servants.

and *sambenitos* in SBO reveals the possible nature of the sins committed and the punishments applied by the Provisory of Natives.

As noted, honorable mentions of members of the Provisory of Indians are revealed by the text on the bottom of the painting. Once the possible audience of this painting is taken into consideration, the pictorial details begin to unravel the realities of these types of commissions. Conceivably, SBO was never viewed outside the inquisitorial palace of México City. Perhaps a broader reception would have obligated the artist to create a more accurate and democratic depiction. A wider audience may have also permitted the artist and the commissioners a more detailed depiction of the *auto* victims. In the end, it is in the attention to detail and the attention to lack of detail in the depiction of victims of the inquisition that most of the answers to the questions posed by such a rare genre of painting may be found. Instead, we have a small group of paintings that testify to the realities behind the inquisition and its artistic commissions.

Chapter 3

Space of Death

Introduction and Theory

The space where autos-de-fé took place varied from region to region. In New Spain before the 19th century, *autos* almost always took place in a public space. This fact allows me to create a generalized analysis of *autos*' public spaces based on important areas where these inquisitorial performances occurred. The center of Mexico City, before and after the conquest, will serve as the basis for my analysis. The principal purpose of this chapter is to study the idea of the Novohispanic space of death before the conquest and during the years of conversion, as well as its culmination in the space illustrated in SBO.

Emilie Carreón Blain, in "Tzompantli Horca y Picota" explains in detail what he calls the "space of death," both before and after the conquest of México. Carreón Blain suggests that in these disparate contexts, the ultimate goal of public death had very different purposes. At the same time, he argues that both spaces were developed in similar ways. In the case of the Aztecs, public sacrifice contained religious, political and ritualistic meanings, while the Spanish sought to re-assure their supremacy through such public displays. In some cases, the Spanish space of death, or auto-de-fé, found its culmination in the killing of the prisoner by flagellation, burning or hanging. Both spaces of death were manipulated by hegemonic forces with political, social and conceptual rationales in mind. In this chapter I will argue that the Aztec and the Novohispanic spaces of death have even more similarities than those mentioned by Carreón. In particular, I will show that the pre-conquest and colonial spaces of death seem to converge in Diego

de Valades' engraving, *Rhetorica Cristiana* (Fig.11 and 12) In this representation, the Aztec sacrifices and the colonial autos-de-fé appear combined, in a possible effort to portray the idea of public death and its respective space. But instead of taking the *Rhetorica* as a point of departure, we must first go back to Carreón Blain to analyze the significance of the space of death.

“El Espacio de la Muerte.”

The space of death was first presented by Michael Taussig in *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man, A Study in Terror and Healing*. Blain explains that Taussig uses the notion of the space of death to refer to a physiological state of mind.¹²⁸ Instead of continuing with Taussig's interpretation, Carreón develops a different meaning for the term. Carreón states that the space of death is a constructed tri-dimensional space that takes a material form. In other words, the space of death becomes a physical and social space in which the meaning of death is configured by its audience according to the context in which is presented. I will use Carreón's definition in the following discussion.

For Henri Lefebvre, a social space is a space lived in by the subjects of a society and composed of the relations between them. Most importantly, a social space is a space that is predisposed to political control.¹²⁹ In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre creates a very detailed analysis of the meaning of social space, using mainly European examples. Although his case studies are not relevant to the purposes of this essay, the methodology and terminology he uses can help us understand the abstract nature of the space of death.

For example, Lefevre defines “illusion of transparency” as an intellectual process

¹²⁸Although not fully explained by Carreón, Taussig's notions of the space of death as a physiological space may have come from the notion that witnessing physical torture in the space of death creates meaning and social control.

taking place between the mind and the social activities surrounding it. These mental activities are experienced by individuals who live in the space and who interpret the signs embedded in it. Their interpretation comes about through the use of language. In the case of the space of death, the space emerges by means of public performance. Consequently, in the case of the Aztecs, the meaning of the Tzompantli is not simply found within the skulls on the rack; rather, its meaning and interpretation are encoded through time in the space of the city of Tenochtitlan and in the memory of its inhabitants. The space of death can be said to be a Dasein¹³⁰ of time, in which its Being¹³¹ is developed from the ritualistic practices found in the Aztec tradition. The development in time of Aztec sacrifice starts with the ritualistic execution of the enemy, or a member of local society, and culminates in the placement of the sacrificed individual's skull in the Tzompantli. On the other hand, transparency in the 18th century space of death would have been deciphered through autos-de-fé. Subsequently, autos-de-fé became the main conductor of a hegemonic language that sought to reinforce its power through transparency in space. More precisely, autos-de-fé represented in visual terms the encoded language of power in public places such as Plaza de Santo Domingo and the space illustrated in SBO.

The specific meaning of the space of death in Mexico City not only changes from period to period, but its polysemic qualities also vary from individual to individual. To give the space of death a single meaning is to ignore the many individual perspectives that constituted the social space of each specific period. The lack of documentation and

¹²⁹ Henri, Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX, UK: Blackwell, 1991), 26-27

¹³⁰ Lefebvre, based on Martin Heidegger, defines Dasein in space as "being there" with relation to time and the history embedded in such being. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX, UK: Blackwell, 1991), 121-22

¹³¹ Being with capital B is commonly used in western phenomenological philosophy to differentiate between

direct testimony from the public in question makes the acknowledgement of each single person who gave meaning to the space of death an impossible task. Instead, I will propose a reading of the space as a progressive colonial development that culminated in the ambiguous space depicted in SBO. These perspectives offer an interpretation of the role of participants in the space of death. More specifically, my analysis will add information to the study of the physical and conceptual dimensions of autos-de-fé and their participants.¹³²

The Illusion of Reality

Lefebvre continues his analysis of social space by explaining another important term, the “illusion of reality.” The illusion of reality deals with the materiality of space and its natural origins. The illusion rests on the idea that the social space was derived from the constrictions that the natural landscape (where all social space is first constructed and produced) imposed on its creators. In other words, this illusion implies the idea that much of the produced space was limited by the natural condition in which it was constructed. Such natural conditions include the climate of the selected space and the shape of the terrain where the space was constructed and consequently, inhabited. However, the inhabited space results from a negotiation between the natural conditions of the physical environment and the conceptual meaning that is desired. In other words, the conceiving of the social space is the combination of the local physical environment, the signs structuring the experience, and the meaning that its participants embed in it.

The illusion of reality concept is not applicable to the space of death for two reasons. First, the space of death is not a fixed location; its dimensions change according

the verb to be and the phenomenon of Being-in-the-world.

to the dynamic relations of those who decipher it. As a result, the question of control over the natural space cannot be applied. The physical dimension of the space of death, as I will later prove, changes together with the dominant forces that provide society with its encrypted transparent meaning. The space of death is re-inscribed according to the historical, religious and temporal context in which it is being developed. Secondly, the notion of death, according to Lefebvre, exists beyond the physical realm. “Death too has a ‘location’, but that location lies below or above appropriated social space; death is relegated to the infinite realm...social space thus remains the space of society, of social life.”¹³³ The location of death creates an obstacle for the development of an analysis of the space of death. Besides the physical and tri-dimensional aspects of Carreón’s space of death, I will also consider a space where the perception of death with location in the infinite and the social space are blurred.

The concept of death with location is the same in spaces used both for sacrifices and for autos-de-fé. The concept refers to an actual physical body with no life, which will find its public display in both kinds of space. The infinite location of death has a conceptual role in the creation of the colonial as well as the pre-colonial spaces of death. For example, for the Aztecs, the universe was arranged along horizontal and vertical dimensions whose *axis mundi* was located in the center (i.e. at Lake Texcoco, where Tenochtitlan was located). From this center different quadrants radiated,, related to several deities, “who helped support the heavens.”¹³⁴ This arrangement also reflected the urban arrangement of Tenochtitlan. The different layers of the Aztec world, one of which

¹³² This would include the spectator-participants.

¹³³ Henri, Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX, UK: Blackwell, 1991), 3

included the land of the death, were manifested in the layout of the city. Also, according to Frances F. Berdan, the Aztec concept of the universe influenced several socio-religious activities: “Religious ceremonies also frequently recognized the quadrants, as did architecture and city planning...”¹³⁵ On the other hand, in *autos-de-fé*, the concept of death also had an impact on the physical space.

During the ceremonies of *autos*, the presence of physical bodies of sinners was important, but many times the offenders were killed before the event, so their presence was manifested through statues. In other words, the physicality of the body of the sinner was not necessary in order to develop the colonial space of death. Furthermore, and as explained by Cañeque in the previous chapter, liberation of the sinner’s soul through repentance was the main goal of *autos-de-fé*. Many times, following the *autos*, the offenders were taken by pilgrimage into another area of the city to be burned, in order to completely liberate the soul from its wrongdoings. The space of death in New Spain can be said to have been altered by the repentance of the sinner’s soul. In like manner, the Aztec and colonial spaces of death were both social spaces manifested in the infinite, and conceived by the members of a society through their interactions. The subjects who conceived the space of death were the spectators of the rituals that involved it as well as the creators who had designed it with a hegemonic agenda in mind. Interactions between these subjects in the space of death are the forces that offer its meaning. Before proposing further analysis of the space of death,, historical background must be presented in order to place this terminology in its determined context.

¹³⁴Berdan, Frances. 2005. *The Aztecs of central Mexico: an imperial society. Case studies in cultural anthropology*, (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005), 129.

¹³⁵*Ibid.* 130

The Historical Development of Space of Death.

One of the ideas proposed earlier in this paper was that the space of death is not a fixed space; the Aztec story of the Tzompantli supports this point. The Tzompantli is generally referred to as the rack of skulls where the craniums of sacrificed individuals were placed after a sacrificial ceremony. According to Emile Carreón Blain, the Tzompantli can be traced back to the Aztec myth of migration from the origin land of Aztlan to Tenochtitlan: “There when they settled, Huizilopochtli built his ball game and raised his Tzompantli; he made a dam, thus creating a place in the image of the promised land.”¹³⁶ In this narrative, we encounter what seems to be the first clue that could reveal the real purpose of the Tzompantli. As part of the area that occupied the ball court, the Tzompantli became a repository of the triumphs that the Mexica must have had over enemies in ball games. These victories were not limited to the triumph of the Mexica in games, however; they also include triumphs over recently conquered lands.¹³⁷ Once the “promised land” was found, Tenochtitlan was constructed, and the nature of the space of death changed once more.

Tenochtitlan’s sacred precinct had eight Tzompantli. All were linked to specific sacrificial ceremonial events,, mainly connected to Mexica triumphs over their conquered

¹³⁶Original text reads as follows: “Ahí cuando se asentaron, Hutzilopachtli edificó su juego de pelota y alzó su Tzompantli; hizo una represa, creando así un lugar en la imagen de la tierra prometida.” For more information on the myth of the Aztec migration according to the Codex Chimalpahin please see Emile Carreón Blain “Tzompantli, Horca y Picota; sacrificio o pena capital” Instituto de Investigaciones estéticas, UNAM, vol. XXVIII, núm. 88 (2006): 15

¹³⁷ ..levantar el tzompantli es un acto obligado, vinculado con la fundación de un asentamiento. Emile Carreón Blain “Tzompantli, Horca y Picota; sacrificio o pena capital” Instituto de Investigaciones estéticas, UNAM, vol. XXVIII, núm. 88 (2006):16. Also, it is important to note that the nature of the Aztec sacrifice, and the audiences varied according to the sacrifice. Many times, only the elites of surrounding areas were invited in order to establish through fear a leadership of the valley. This chapters seeks to consider those sacrifices where anybody from local population was invited.

communities.¹³⁸ Although the historical background of each of the Tzompantli is very important, the main idea is to understand that, in general, the Aztec space of death is strictly linked to sacrificial practices. Therefore, the space of death is not limited to the particular grounds surrounding the Tzompantli. In order to understand the development of the Aztec space of death, its conceptual and physical dimensions must be also traced back to the spaces where the sacrifices of the Mexicas took place. Furthermore, in order to comprehend the purpose of the Tzompantli, one must comprehend the reasons behind the practice of sacrifice within Mexica culture.

Aztec Sacrifice

Understanding Aztec sacrificial practices is key to analyzing the space of death. In “Templo Mayor as Ritual Space,” Johanna Broda explains that the Templo Mayor, or the main temple of the city of Tenochtitlan, was a civic center at which the meaning encoded in the transparency of the city was to be decoded. Broda suggests that the Templo Mayor, represented the political integrity of the city: “It was the place where politics and ideology blended into one single structure.”¹³⁹ The tendency may exist to believe that ritualistic sacrifices represented an effort to create a hierarchical power and to demonstrate the dominant forces of Tenochtitlan. On the other hand, enough evidence exists to support the notion that sacrifices were part of a very complex socio-religious structure.

For example, Kay Read in her essay, “Sacred Commoners: The Motion of Cosmic Powers in Mexican Rulership,” explores the importance offerings had in Aztec culture. Composed of all living things, the Aztec world had to be fed in order for life to continue.

¹³⁸See Emile Carreón Blain “Tzompantli, Horca y Picota; sacrificio o pena capital” Instituto de Investigaciones estéticas, UNAM, vol. XXVIII, núm. 88 (2006): 18-1

In the same way that humans must eat in order to stay alive, nature and the gods who ruled it had to be nourished for their survival. Everything in the Aztec cosmos was alive, and food had to be offered in order to prevent death.¹⁴⁰ Blood was considered the main essence of life in the cosmos, so through human sacrifice the Aztecs were able to sustain the universe. Johanna Broda supports this concept: “the sun, whose cult was the supreme religious task of the Aztec warrior-nobility, required human blood and the slaying of victims.”¹⁴¹ In the final analysis, the sacrifices, although they may have not attempted to subjugate the local masses to the control of warriors and rulers, helped to justify the values of an expansionist and conquering state.¹⁴² The sacrifices thus became a source of political justification and social integrity; most importantly, they sustained the order of the Aztec cosmos, whose life had to be preserved. Sacrifices were not only useful for the legitimization of the state throughout its expanding history, but also in the eyes of commoners, who understood them as a necessary mode of sustenance for the universe.

The real purpose of the Tzompantli has always been debated, and its correlation with the practice of sacrifice has not been rejected. However, it is necessary to re-establish its potential meaning in order to continue with the analysis of the space of death. For Carreón, the Tzompantli as space of death constituted a space that served as testimony of the relationship between gods and civic life in which the most important

¹³⁹Johanna Broda “Templo Mayor as Ritual Space,” in *The Great Temple of Tenochtitlan: center and periphery in the Aztec world* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 64

¹⁴⁰Kay Read. “Sacred Commoners: The Motion of Cosmic Powers in Mexican Rulership” *History of religions*, vol 34, No. 1 (1994): 43

¹⁴¹Johanna Broda “Templo Mayor as Ritual Space,” in *The Great Temple of Tenochtitlan: center and periphery in the Aztec world* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 64

¹⁴²*Ibid.* 64

priority was the order of the cosmos.¹⁴³ In addition, the Tzompantli was linked to the much more complex religious ideology explained by Barbara E. Mundy in “Mapping the Aztec Capital: The 1524 Nuremberg Map of Tenochtitlan, Its Sources and Meanings.” Mundy understands that the practice of sacrifice sustained the Aztec Cosmos, and saw it represented in both, the Tzompantli and the Templo Mayor: “It was the act that transformed the twin temples into the sacred mountain of Coatepec; it was the ritual that aligned human communities with divine needs.”¹⁴⁴

Analyzing the Nuremberg map (Fig. 7) and the frontispiece of the *Codex Fejervary-Mayer* (Fig. 8)¹⁴⁵ Mundy arrives at the conclusion that in both images, the Tzompantli is represented as part of the major Culhua-Mexica cosmos arrangement. This arrangement separates the city into several layers. The first layer is the temple represented on both maps. The temple corresponds to the sun, the center of the Aztec universe. Secondly, Mundy sees in the Nuremberg map that the earth is represented as a headless victim. The headless victim was known to the Aztecs as Tlaltecuhltli. In the Codex, Tlaltecuhltli is shown with his blood rushing to the center, which must have been understood to be Tlaltecuhltli, or “earth monster.” Tlaltecuhltli was normally represented with his mouth open in order to receive the sacrificial blood. Finally, Mundy explains that Mictlantecuhltli, or Lord of the Land of the Death, lay below Tlatecuhltli. Mictlantecuhltli, in the Nuremberg Map, is represented by the two Tzompantli (which could easily be confused with corn plants) that are placed to the left and below the

¹⁴³ Emile Carreón Blain “Tzompantli, Horca y Picota; sacrificio o pena capital” Instituto de Investigaciones estéticas, UNAM, vol. XXVIII, núm. 88 (2006): 27

¹⁴⁴ Coatepec is also known as the “Serpent Mountain” which was the birth place of their god Huitzilopochtli. Mundy Barbara E. Mundy, “Mapping the Aztec Capital: The 1524 Nuremberg Map of Tenochtitlan, Its Sources and Meanings,” *Imago Mundi*, Vol. 50 (1998): 20

headless figure. Mundy concludes that although the *Codex Fejervary-Mayer* was not created in the pre-Columbian period but during the 16th century, the arrangement of the Aztec cosmos must have been understood as such.¹⁴⁶

The readings of both the *Codex Fejervary-Meyer* and the *Nuremberg Map* provided by Barbara Mundy indicate the importance of the space of death as part of the visual conceptual order of the Aztec cosmos. In the case of the Nuremberg map, it is easy to see how a “westerner” could have read the center of the map as the starting point of the Aztec cosmos’ order (Fig. 9). The Templo Mayor is then placed in the center as the most important part of the city. Also, the center of the map can be read from top to bottom, reaffirming the notion of the sun-temple/earth-Tlatltecuhli/Tzompantli-Mictlantecuhli relationships of the Culhua-Mexica cosmos. The reading of the *Codex Fejervary-Meyer* is more complicated when Mundy offers an exact top to bottom reading of the center of the codex. The problem with this reading is that it may not have been the traditional mode of Mexica reading.

Even when the map and the *Codex* serve as visual proof of a possible interpretation of the order of the Culhua-Mexica cosmos, it is important to recognize that the “Land of Death,” or Mictlan, may have corresponded to the Tzompantli. If we accept this view, the Tzompantli becomes a manifestation of the god-commoner relationship that was necessary for the preservation of the cosmos through sacrifice. In addition, the Tzompantli and the Templo Mayor became a necessary physical manifestation and visual component of the Aztec cosmos in social space. When we accept Mundy’s reading, the

¹⁴⁵ The map of Nuremberg is also known as Cortés’ very European description of Tenochtitlan and a gift sent to Charles V

Nuremberg map becomes the only colonial source that validates Aztec sacrifice. Cortéz may have understood Aztec sacrifice as a necessary ritual, which is unusual considering that this concept was completely ignored and disregarded by most of the Spanish conquerors.

The Conquest.

During the early 16th century, the space of death dramatically changed. One of the most striking images comes from the *Codice Florentino* by Bernardino de Sahagún. The picture under discussion shows us a *Tzompantli* with the heads of Spaniards, Natives, and horses (Fig. 10). As noted by Carreón, the heads received no ritualistic importance, and instead of the fleshy components that hide their skulls being stripped away, the victims are shown as if they had just been murdered. In this composition, the ritualistic development of sacrifice is abruptly displaced by a shocking display of triumph over the enemy. Although the *Tzompantli* was always seen as a proof of the power and expansion of the empire, its meaning did not end there. Its significance as part of the space of death was preceded by an elaborate ritual that included the sacrifice and cleaning of craniums to be displayed. Basing his argument on Bernal Diaz del Castillo's account, Carreón suggests that Moctezuma, horrified when he saw the heads of the Spanish, ordained, "not to offer them in any Mexican temple."¹⁴⁷ Although this interpretation was also supported by the texts of Hernán Cortés, and Bernardino de Sahagún, it cannot be taken as truth, since no images survive to explain the Aztec side of the story.

¹⁹ Any document or codex created during the colonial period must be understood as having "western" Christian influences.

¹⁴⁷ The Translation reads as follow: "not to offer it at any Mexican temple." Emile Carreón Blain "Tzompantli, Horca y Picota; sacrificio o pena capital" Instituto de Investigaciones estéticas, UNAM, vol. XXVIII, núm. 88 (2006):30

Diego Durán, in *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e Islas de Tierra Firme* (1574-76), describes in gruesome detail the *Huey Tzompantli* of *Templo Mayor*. His account includes a narrative of the Aztec sacrifice that reiterates the Spaniards' disregard for the religious significance of these practices. Referring to the people who perform the sacrificial ritual as "butchers and ministers of Satan," Durán completely ignores the cultural and religious importance the ritual represented for the local community.¹⁴⁸ Later, however, Durán compares the *Tzomapantli* with the concept of sacrifice. . Nevertheless, nothing other than a straightforward description of what the Aztecs did with some of the craniums is described. In fact, Durán continues to state that the flesh was eaten off of the skulls' faces before the craniums were placed in the *Tzompantli* for public display: "These skulls were all of the sacrificed to whom once they were death and their flesh eaten out of their faces, they would be given to the ministers to be placed there."¹⁴⁹ No proof exists regarding cannibalistic rituals that might have been involved in the ceremony that surrounds the *Tzompantli*.¹⁵⁰

Durán demonstrates the inability of the Spanish to comprehend the religious and cultural activities of the Aztecs. Without understanding the ritual importance of the displayed heads, the justification and legitimization that was part of the entrenched meaning of the Aztec space of death is completely destroyed. The space of death, judging by the image by Sahagún and the evidence provided by Durán, suffered a short moment

¹⁴⁸ The translation reads as follow: "carniceros y ministros de satanas." Diego Durán, Rosa Camelo, and José Rubén Romero, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e islas de tierra firme* (Cien de México. México, D.F.: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1995), 32

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. 31. The original text reads as follows: "estas Calaveras todas eran de los que sacrificaban á los cuales después de muertos y comida la carne trayan la calavera y entregavanla á los ministros del templo y ellos las ensartavan ally. These skulls were all of the sacrificed to whom once they were death and their flesh eaten out of their faces, they would be given to the ministers to be placed there."

of complete simplification, in which no clear meaning other than the notion of revenge and shock was conveyed. The legitimization of the space of death never returned to its Aztec ceremonial and cosmological significance. Instead, through autos-de-fé, the space of death suffered a period of evangelization that culminated in the institutionalization of Novohispanic public displays of death.

In the eyes of Durán, a Dominican friar, the *Tzompantli*, human sacrifices, and many other practices of the Aztecs were linked to diabolic manifestations in the Americas.¹⁵¹ Activities of the mendicant orders (Franciscans, Dominicans, etc...) were dedicated to the conversion of Natives to the Catholic religion. These conversions tended to demonize the religious practices of the Aztecs and other conquered peoples. Indians were seen as victims of Satan, and the mission of the Catholic religious orders was to convince the Natives of the erroneous state in which they had been living all those years. Estela Roselló Soberón, in *Así en la Tierra Como en el Cielo*, explains that if Indians “practiced cannibalism they practiced human sacrifice...., which according to Christian mentality these were customs that were not due to a inherent bad mentality, but was a disgrace of Satan.”¹⁵² The job of the orders included the process of eliminating old religious practices as well as instruction in new ones. It is precisely through the process of conversion that many religious and cultural practices were re-interpreted, misinterpreted

¹⁵⁰ It is important to mention that the practice of cannibalism has been a tool of the “westerner” to diminish the civilized status of the conquered societies.

¹⁵¹ Estela Roselló Soberón, *Así en la tierra como en el cielo: manifestaciones cotidianas de la culpa y el perdón en la Nueva España de los siglos XVI y XVII*. (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 2006), 69

¹⁵²Original text reads as follows: “practicaban el canibalismo, realizaban sacrificios humanos....según la mentalidad Cristiana, estas malas costumbres no se debían a una naturaleza mala inherente a los indios mismos, sino mas bien a la infamia de Satán.” Estela Roselló Soberón, *Así en la tierra como en el cielo: manifestaciones cotidianas de la culpa y el perdón en la Nueva España de los siglos XVI y XVII*. (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 2006), 69

or completely ignored. For example, the doctrines of Fray Alfonso de Molina, which were widely diffused among Franciscans and Dominicans alike, warned against sacrifices by affirming that God, “does not accept blood offerings, and would be offended if men were sacrificed to him.”¹⁵³ One of the most important documents and pictorial descriptions surviving the early evangelization of New Spain comes from a Novohispanic Franciscan friar, Diego de Valadés.

Diego de Valadés and the First Image of Auto-de-Fé

Diego de Valadés’ works are of significant importance to historians, theologians, and art historians alike. In *Rhetorica Christiana*, Valadés introduced easier forms of evangelization through a new structure of rhetoric that was to facilitate the job of the mendicant orders in New Spain. In *Mnemosine Novohispánica; Retórica e Imágenes en el Siglo XVI*, Linda Báez Rubí introduces Valadés’ *Rhetorica* as an example of Franciscan evangelical methods employed to transmit the Christian doctrine to the Indians in an easier manner.¹⁵⁴ Along with his written teachings, Valadés illustrated his *Rhetorica* with twenty-seven engravings. Although the illustrations do not correlate with the text, they offer a Christian interpretation of Native practices.¹⁵⁵ This reading can be said to reflect many attempts by the various mendicant orders to describe the diverse cultural and religious practices of Natives in the recently conquered lands. The twenty-seven engravings were used as pedagogical-evangelical tools, and as a pictorial dictionary. One of the most interesting images of the entire collection is the illustration known to

¹⁵³Ricard, Robert, *The spiritual conquest of Mexico; an essay on the apostolate and the evangelizing methods of the mendicant orders in New Spain, 1523-157*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 105.

¹⁵⁴ However Brendan Branley in his dissertation defense pointed out that the main audience for these illustrations was European.

Linda Báez as *Encyclopedic Vision of the Indigenous World* (EVIW).¹⁵⁶

Báez ignores the center of this engraving in order to promote her analysis of the encyclopedic nature of Valadés' illustrations (Fig. 11 and 12). A formalist approach to the EVIW not only reveals Valadés's interest in creating a guide to Native customs, but also, for the purpose of this essay, will facilitate my interpretation of the pictorial transmutation that the space of death underwent during the beginning of evangelization. It is important to note that, these illustrations were intended for the European eye. While the entire work was to serve as an evangelical tool, the illustrations, especially EVIW, were created to instruct friars who sought new methods of conversion, and to teach Europeans about people in the new expanded territories. Báez makes this point very clear when she mentions that the customs and ceremonies of Natives were illustrated in a way that "would be comprehended from its own cause by the Europeans."¹⁵⁷ This explains the titles underneath some of the plants and the constant civic activity that surrounds the center of the image. Among these noted activities, a woman grinding corn can be spotted to the left of the hybridized temple, while in the top left of the picture, a group of men is shown fishing. The Latin inscription on the upper portion makes note of the sacrifice occurring in the center, but Báez ignores it in her encyclopedic analysis.

The intention of the image is to capture the eye and direct the gaze towards the

¹⁵⁵ Point made by Brendan Branley in his 2008 dissertation defense.

¹⁵⁶The title in Spanish reads as "Visión enciclopédica del mundo indígena." Linda Báez Rubí, *Mnemosine novohispánica: retórica e imágenes en el siglo XVI*. (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 2005), 171,172

¹⁵⁷ The original text reads as follow: "como parte de su encyclopedia retórica considero la necesidad de introducir a los Europeos a 'las costumbres y ceremonias de los nativos, de manera tal que el efecto [modo de vida] sea comprendido desde su causa.'"Linda Báez Rubí, *Mnemosine novohispánica: retórica e imágenes en el siglo XVI*. (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 2005), 171

center of the picture. (Fig. 12). Not only does the temple dominate a large part of the middle ground of the picture's plane, but, as I have mentioned, the text on the top of the picture corresponds to this event, not to the activities surrounding it. The first thing that captured my attention is that the shrine seems to have been created out of both European and Mesoamerican architectural components. A Renaissance niche can be seen on top of a half-constructed (or perhaps half-destroyed) pyramid, creating the impression that something important was taking place on the elevated stage. In fact, judging by the dancers at the foot of the pyramid and the people descending the staircase, we get the sense that a sacrificial ritual is taking place. The lack of other similar visual and written accounts makes it very difficult to read this image. An explanation for this illustration resides in the Spanish view that the violent nature of sacrificial rituals was unjustified. The act portrayed in Valades' print was very likely misinterpreted and misread as both a groundless form of Native sacrifice and as an inquisitorially justified form of punishment.

The crowd's arrangement in the middle of the half-pyramid makes it easier for the viewer to interpret the event as a form of Indigenous auto-de-fé. This arrangement seems to follow the characteristics found in many images of *autos* in which groups of elite members of the inquisition presided over the sentencing and punishment of one or more heretics. The offenders' vestments were composed of a *coroza* (canonical hat) and a *sambenito* (ceremonial robe), which were often decorated with images that implied the sin, or sins, committed. The pronounced *coroza* illustrated in EVIW would help the European viewer to understand the sacrificial act as a form of a Native *auto*.¹⁵⁸ The individual in the center is dressed differently from all the other people involved in the

¹⁵⁸ Similar to Aztec noble regalia

ceremony. His or her inquisitorial regalia seems to indicate that the justifications for the sacrifices are the sins committed against the Catholic tradition. To further strengthen the composition, the victim seems to carry in his or her hand the diverse paraphernalia of a Catholic ceremony of the Eucharist. According to Elizabeth H. Boone, the victim is making offerings to the Aztec god Huitzilopochtli, who in the image is “presented as a Roman God, or better as a statue of a Roman god.”¹⁵⁹ In this particular illustration, the transition of the space of death from the Aztec to the Catholic tradition can thus be said to undergo its most significant illustrative change. The public display of death was not exclusive to Mesoamerican cultures; however, the European justifications differed from the Aztec reasons. In other words, what this image predicts is that the meaning of the space of death was to change and that the apparent cruelty of Native sacrifice was soon to be understood as an inquisitorial act against human sin. Specifically, this image introduces the institutionalization of public death.

The Space of Death and the Colonial Auto-de-Fé

An important fact worth noting is that the transformation of the space of death, from Tzompantli to auto-de-fé, represents only a small portion of the process of exploration, conversion and hybridization of Aztec practices in the recently conquered lands of New Spain. Hybrid practices include the use of the Aztec urban quadrant that served as a base for the construction of the ideal Vitruvian city. Also, the consumption of chocolate, whose ceremonial attributes were absorbed yet misinterpreted by Europeans, is a Mesoamerican practice that changed during the colonial period. The space of death underwent a transition in which the justification of public displays of death was

¹⁵⁹ Elizabeth H. Boone, "Incarnations of the Aztec Supernatural: The Image of Huitzilopochtli in Mexico

controlled by the colonizer for the main purpose of generating fear in the population. Although this was one of the reasons behind the Aztec space of death, its ultimate legitimization resided in sacrificial feeding of the cosmos.

The second part of Carreón's essay concentrates on the proliferation of *horcas* and *picotas* (gallows and pillories) throughout the towns of New Spain. Similar to the Aztec space of death, this space was not fixed in a single location, and, as mentioned previously, its physical dimensions changed along with the dominant forces that provided society with its encrypted transparent meaning. During the first decades of the conquest, the encrypted meaning of the new space of death lay in the hands of Cortéz: "By order of Cortéz a gallow was erected. This was raised to execute a young Tlazcaltec noble....With this act, he intimidated the Indians of his army..."¹⁶⁰ As Thomas Calvo noted in his essay, "Soberano, Plebe y Cadalso bajo una misma luz en Nueva Espana," "central México was the only one that by the end of the 16th century had integrated the group of codes assimilating in good part the life in the city-urbanism-, the plaza, the fountain, and the gallow-pillory."¹⁶¹ Fear was the name of the game. In order for everyone to witness the new hegemonic forces in action, *horcas* and *picotas* were ordered to be constructed in the main plazas of different Novohispanic cities

Another similarity between the Aztec and the colonial space of death is that their

and Europe," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, New Series, Vol. 79, No. 2 (1989): 59

¹⁶⁰ The original text reads as follows: "Por orden de Cortéz se also otra horca. Esta la erigió para ejecutar a un joven noble Tlaxcalteca....Con este acto, atemorizo a los indios de su ejército..." Emilie Carreón Blaine. "Tzompantli, Horca y Picota; sacrificio o pena capital" Instituto de Investigaciones estéticas, UNAM, vol. XXVIII, núm. 88 (2006): 33

¹⁶¹The original text reads as follows; "el Mexico central es el único en haber integrado, para fines del siglo XVI, el conjunto de los códigos, asimilando, en buena medida, la vida de la ciudad-la urbanidad-, la plaza, la fuente, y la picota-horca." Thomas Calvo, "Soberano, Plebe y Cadalso bajo una misma luz en Nueva Espana" in *Historia de la vida cotidiana en México : tomo III: El siglo XVIII : entre tradición y cambio*, ed. Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México ; Fondo de Cultura Económica 2005), 292.

function in both cases was to be viewed by everyone. In fact, Carreón notes that *picotas* and *horcas* were erected in the center of the towns where the conquerors first settled. In this manner, Tzompantli and *horca y picota* were interpreted not only through the physical structures themselves, but more importantly, through the relations and interrelations between spectators and those in whose hands public death was carried. These spaces of death would have been useless if the spectators, or targeted audience, had been absent. The transparency of their meaning would have been lost. In the case of the Aztecs, the act of feeding the cosmos with sacrificial blood, the creation of the justification for expanding territory, and its ultimate visual expression in the Tzompantli, all would have been lost without the participation of the community. In the case of the colonial space of death, and later in autos-de-fé, the implementation of fear and the consequent domination over the populous would have not have happened without the audience's involvement as both spectator and participant. Michel Foucault, in *Discipline and Punish*, confirms the role of the spectator during these types of events;

Not only must people know, they must see with their own eyes. Because they must be made to be afraid; but also because they must be the witnesses, the guarantors, of the punishment, and because they must to a certain extent participate in it.¹⁶²

Foucault's argument is based mainly on documents on public executions from 18th and 19th century Europe. Although his analysis ignores the peripheries of the European colonial territories, it nonetheless gives insight into to how the participation of a community in public displays of death could be viewed as primordial. Furthermore, the participation of the community in the space of death was essential, since, without them,

¹⁶² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 58.

its conceptual elements would have had no transparent meaning. Returning to Lefebvre, the relations that take place in the produced space become the main component behind what we call social space. In both pre-conquest and colonial spaces, the social relations that occur within the space of death turn out to be essential for the integrity of the population, and for the preservation of the colonial agenda of hegemony.

The Spanish Inquisition was the vehicle through which the space of death was institutionalized in New Spain. Although the legal date of the founding of the Novohispanic Inquisition occurred a few decades after the conquest, there are documents that describe *autos* before the first official ceremony took place in 1574.¹⁶³ In *Historia del Tribunal del Santo Oficio de la Inquisición en México*, José Toribio Medina explains that some of the early *autos* were carried out to punish the misconduct of friars.¹⁶⁴ Although punishment of friars was not the main reason behind the establishment of the inquisition, we can clearly see that under its jurisdiction all realms of the population were to be controlled in one way or another.¹⁶⁵ The reasons for the inquisition provided by Felipe II established that severe punishments were to be applied to those heretics who were not obedient to the law, according to Catholic dogma.¹⁶⁶ The founding of the inquisition as a regulatory institution in New Spain followed almost immediately after the conquest. The first inquisitors arrived to Mexico City in September, 1571, and from 1574 until the early

¹⁶³ José Toribio Medina, *Historia del Tribunal del Santo Oficio de la Inquisición en México* (México. San Ángel, México: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1991), 56

¹⁶⁴ Chapter 2 looks closely into the inquisitorial powers given to 16th Friars, and the impact the exercising of this control had over the Native populations of central New Spain.

¹⁶⁵ The Spanish Inquisition was first established in Spain in the late 15th century to control the population of Jewish Converses. A more detailed analysis of the Spanish inquisition and its transference to the Americas is done in chapters 2 and 4 of this project.

¹⁶⁶ The letter was published as part of José Toribio Medina, *Historia del Tribunal del Santo Oficio de la Inquisición en México* (México. San Ángel, México: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1991), 44. More information on this letter is given in the past two chapters.

19th Century, autos-de-fé were celebrated throughout the territories of New Spain. The space of death was to be transformed again, as it was in the Aztec period, into a spectacle for the masses.

Throughout the entire colonial period, the space of death was a controlled manifestation of the forces that formed the Novohispanic Inquisition. Similar to the Aztec space of death, the colonial *autos* were manifested through a very elaborate and complicated process that began with a religious procession. The principal justification behind autos-de-fé was that they were celebrated in public as a way to openly confront the sins of heretics and to announce their penance to the masses. Although Catholic undertones manifested in the actions of the inquisition may give the impression that it was exclusively a branch of the Church, we must understand that most of the inquisition's activities were actually controlled by the crown.

Considering the inquisitorial interrelationship of Church and State, we can arrive to yet another parallel between the Aztec space of death and the colonial one. For example, drawing on the conclusions reached earlier in this paper regarding the Aztec sacrifices, we can deduce that the forces behind such practices were a combination of the ruling class and the religious beliefs of the period. And in both the Aztec and the colonial spaces of death, the eventual objective resided not only in the religious beliefs of the community or the leaders behind it. Instead, as previously mentioned, the ultimate goal was to subjugate the masses under an imperialistic hegemonic power that would lead the lower classes to understand the power to which they were subjected. In the case of Aztec sacrifices, it is harder to make these claims since most of the evidence historians have to work with dates only to the colonial period, linked in particular to religious aspects.

However, the evidence that has survived from the Novohispanic Inquisition, such as the declaration of Felipe II and his reasoning behind the founding of this institution in the Americas, makes it easier to claim that the main goals of the inquisition and the autos-de-fé were to subjugate the masses.¹⁶⁷

In the 16th century, the *horcas* and *picotas* of colonial plazas became the principal forms of public displays of death. Soon after 1574, however, *autos* became the ultimate manifestation of the space of death in the valley of Mexico. *Autos* were celebrated throughout plazas in what today is known as El Centro Histórico of Mexico City. The most important civic squares where the performance of the colonial space of death was created were the *Plaza Mayor*, the *Plaza de Santo Domingo*, and the *Alameda Central*. The *Plaza Mayor*, according to Carreón, became a space of death by 1551 in response to the Viceroy Luis de Velasco's orders. Based on documents found in Carreón's extensive research, the first *horcas* and *picotas* were placed on the south side of the *Plaza Mayor* in front of the main government building. The date of the first *picota* in Mexico City determines the exclusively political nature of the early 16th century space of death. The Mexican Tribunal of the Holy Inquisition did not open until 1574, and the *autos* celebrated prior to that date were mainly private in nature. This information clarifies that the practice of the space of death cannot be connected to religion until 1574.

The Inquisition and its Plaza.

When the inquisitors first arrived in Mexico City, they were immediately settled in the new convent of Santo Domingo.¹⁶⁸ The convent was and still is located in what today is

¹⁶⁷ Chapter 1 and 2 provide a deeper look into the letter of Felipe II

¹⁶⁸ Pedro Alvarez y Gasca, *La Plaza de Santo Domingo de Mexico* (Mexico D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1971), 75-76

known as *Plaza de Santo Domingo*, which by the 1730's housed the palace of the inquisition. Even before the 1730's, the *casas* (homes) used by the inquisition were located in the same location as the 18th century palace. The inquisitors quickly realized the necessity for a larger space in which to conduct their duties. Most importantly, issues were raised as to where to place the cells that were to house the hundreds of sinners to be executed during the public ceremonies.¹⁶⁹ The houses were constructed in the same space presently occupied by the Palace of the Inquisition in the *Plaza de Santo Domingo*. The current palace was finished by the mid-18th century, and although several names are linked to its creation, Pedro de Arrieta took over the project during the years of its completion: "During the last years of his life and during plentiful professional maturity, he became a central figure in the most important period of the tribunal's architecture."¹⁷⁰ The construction project of the inquisition palace lasted for several decades. Despite the fact that much can be said regarding the process and its architects, the important characteristic to be noted is that the project was never relocated to any other space in the city.

La Plaza de Santo Domingo was one of the most important centers for colonial Novohispanic civic life. The important significance of this plaza as a social space presents a dilemma that hardly any scholars have tackled. Francisco Santos Zertuche, in *Señorío, Dinero y Arquitectura; El Palacio de la Inquisición de México, 1571, 1820*

¹⁶⁹ Francisco de la Maza, *El Palacio de la Inquisición* (Escuela Nacional de Medicina). México, D.F. (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 1985).14

¹⁷⁰Original text reads as follow: "Durante los últimos años de su vida, en plena madurez profesional, fue protagonista central del periodo más importante de la arquitectura del tribunal." "During the last years of his life and during plentiful professional maturity, he became a central figure in the most important period of the tribunal's architecture." Francisco Jose Santos Zertuche. *Señorío, dinero y arquitectura: el Palacio de la Inquisición de México, 1571-1820.*(Mexico: El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 2000), 135.

notes some of the possible reasons why the inquisition first established its quarters in *Plaza de Santo Domingo*. He acknowledges the importance of *Santo Domingo* as a social space and links it to the construction of Convent of Santo Domingo. In fact, several authors who describe the convent as the first refuge of the inquisitors note that it was an ideal place to settle: “Houses as new and comfortable that no others like them could be found in the city.”¹⁷¹ Once the first inquisitors settled, they took advantage of the importance the convent and the plaza had for the populous. Santos Zertuche notes, “the Dominicans utilized this urban space or public plaza, the cloister of the convent, the atrium, and the temple for such well attended celebrations.”¹⁷² Autos-de-fé were the most important celebrations that the inquisition undertook using the convent, and later their palace, as a backdrop. *Plaza de Santo Domingo* was not the only plaza in the city in which the space of death was developed during the colonial period. In fact, according to Santos Zertuche, the most important *auto*, celebrated in 1649, took place in *Plaza del Volador*.¹⁷³ In view of the ever-changing locales for autos-de-fé, we can conclude with the idea that the colonial space of death, like the *Tzompantli*, was not a fixed space. Further, its transparent meaning, as with any other space of death, was deciphered by its participants according to the context in which it was presented.

The SBO Space of Death

¹⁷¹ The original text reads as follow: “casas tan nuevas y tan cómodas que no se pudieran hallar en la ciudad otras tan al propósito.” Francisco de la Maza, *El Palacio de la Inquisición* (Escuela Nacional de Medicina). México, D.F. (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 1985), 9.

¹⁷²The original text reads as follows: “los dominicos utilizaron el espacio urbano o plaza pública, el claustro de convento, el atrio y el templo para tan concurridas celebraciones.” Francisco Jose Santos Zertuche. *Señorío, dinero y arquitectura: el Palacio de la Inquisición de México, 1571-1820.*(Mexico: El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 2000), 229.

¹⁷³ The Plaza del Volador was an important site for civic Native life as wells as home of the largest second hand market of the 17th Century. Please see R. Douglas Cope, *The limits of racial domination: plebeian society in colonial Mexico City, 1660-1720* (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 37.

In San Bartolome the Oztolotepec, the space of death may have had a layout very similar to that of spaces used for public death displays in Mexico City. No information has been recorded as to exactly where the *auto* depicted in SBO, took place; nonetheless, a research trip I took revealed one possible scenario. The ambiguity of the constructed visual space in SBO obscures its placement in the layout of a city. Therefore, the viewer is left speculating about the exact location of the *auto* that is taking place. Although we do not know if the illustrated performance was recorded as a document of an actual *auto*, we can still speculate about its location. Based on the writing cartouche at the bottom of the painting, we can assume that the depicted *auto* may have occurred in San Bartolome Oztolotepec. This town in the state of México has since changed its name to Villa de Cuauhtémoc; it is located 52 kilometers from Mexico City and 28 from Toluca. The *Enciclopedia de los Municipios de México Online* states that construction of the church of San Bartolome Apóstol began in 1705.¹⁷⁴ The construction was supervised by Bachiller Don José López de Xardón and built by the Otomi Natives of the region. According to the painting's text, the depicted *auto* was presided over by Don José López de Xardón. In other words, we can imagine that López de Xardón was a priest in charge of much of the ecclesiastical procedures of *San Bartolome Oztolotepec*. Based on a photograph taken on site, the church takes pride in acknowledging its foundation date as 1708. (Fig.13) The church's construction, according to its website, was concluded in 1725.¹⁷⁵ Assuming that the church was constructed between 1708 and 1725, it is not difficult to suppose that it

¹⁷⁴ J. Jesús Téllez Portillo, entry in "Encyclopedia de los Municipios de Mexico," E-Local, entry posted in 2005, <http://www.e-local.gob.mx/work/templates/enciclo/mexico/mpios/15067a.htm> (accessed December 15, 2009).

¹⁷⁵ San Bartolome, Apóstol, "Historia y Ubicacio Geografica," San Bartolome, Apóstol, <http://www.villacuauhtemoc.org.mx/>.

was not finished by 1716, the year the *auto* illustrated in SBO took place. (Fig 14)

In SBO we do not see any signs of construction. Again, if we follow the lower writing cartouche, and take into consideration the information provided by the two official websites, we can deduce that the *auto* took place in the same space the Church of San Bartolome, Apóstol presently occupies, or in front of it. The significant reason behind this assumption is the fact that the church is located across from the town's main plaza. By way of explanation, the *auto* illustrated in SBO must have taken place in the most public area of town. Anywhere the space of death was performed, the meaning was to be decoded by its participants with the ultimate goal of understanding the power and control of its creators. The Church in *San Bartolome Otzolotepec*, *Plaza de Santo Domingo*, and *Plaza Voladores*, which are all spaces of death developed during different stages of the colonial period, were all significant urban centers, whose central locations encouraged the local community to congregate. Furthermore, the important civic and/or religious buildings that frame such plazas encouraged communal assembly by means of public performances similar to autos-de-fé.

Chapter Conclusions.

This chapter has aimed to explain the colonial space of death in New Spain. The discussion could be extended to cover the beginning of the 19th century, when the inquisition continued to develop the space of death as a private practice. In 1820, the Novohispanic Inquisition was finally abolished. The subsequent private *autos* did not have the same power of outreach over the population. Interpretation of their transparent and encrypted repressive meaning became obsolete and concealed..

From Tzompantli to autos-de-fé, the space of death represented a primordial

aspect of civic life in the Valley of Mexico. As seen throughout this essay, the space of death, more than a mere space, represents a process in which meaning emerges from the relations and interrelations of its participants. This meaning is multivalent, and it changes according to the many conditions affecting its development. While the form of the physical space of death drastically changed from Tzompantli to autos-de-fé, its conceptual significance did not. The Spanish and the Aztecs created similar spaces for the public display of death. The public nature of these spaces was embedded with meaning to be decoded by the participants. Once this process reached its goal, the space of death concluded its function by implanting fear in its participants, and, consequently, control over the masses. History has shown us that these types of processes are extremely complex and should not be linked to only a single period of time. In the final analysis, the space of death is nothing more than another hegemonic agency, which like many processes in the colonial period, became a matter of power and control.

Conclusion

The lack of documentation in regards to the participation of Natives in *autos* throughout the colonial period imposed significant limitations in the development of my thesis. Nonetheless, by analyzing the available data in regards to the relationship of Natives, the inquisition, and their presence in *autos*, a more thorough analysis of SBO has been made possible. For the purpose of this project the available data ranged from the history of the inquisition in Spain and New Spain, to the importance of the space where autos took place in the central valley of México. By combining some of the aspects of autos as image and performance I was able to offer an interpretation on the participation of Natives in autos-de-fé. My interpretation sprung from a series of questions posed as a contemporary spectator of images of autos-de-fé. While the historical and spatial analysis of autos became major contributions to the progress of my reading, it was the conceptual ideas evoked by SBO the determinative factors behind my interpretations.

It has been made clear to me that instead of trying to offer answers as to why events such as autos-de-fé occurred in the first place, it is more important to pose questions and to offer responsible interpretations without claiming to redeem a past that does not belong to us. Among those questions I asked the following: To whom were paintings of autos-de-fé created and what was their main purpose? Why were Natives judged in a very similar way as Jews and other groups? What was the main motivation for the creation of the Spanish Inquisition?

These questions have and will continue to fill essays and books without being fully answered. The purpose of these questions is to begin, and in cases, to continue dialogue. Exchange of ideas regarding the reasons behind the history of the inquisition,

the execution of its public performances, and the production of images supporting it will continue for years to come. For example, the first question regarding the reception of auto-de-fé images in New Spain may be answered by looking at very similar commission in Spain. While, this comparison may not answer the true reasons behind inquisitorial art commission in New Spain, it brings us closer to explaining the existence of auto-de-fé images in the Americas. As part of my intention to bring this project to a dissertation level, and in order to pose more questions and possible answers, I will carry on the investigation about similar Novohispanic images in different areas of the Spanish empire.

Assuming that the commission of SBO is similar in nature to the commission of Spanish paintings such as Francisco Rizi's *Auto-de-fé en la Plaza Mayor*, we can begin to make conclusions on the nature of the audience that may have witnessed this image. Most likely, inquisitorial members that had access to the palace of the inquisition in México City, or other important central Mexican buildings of the Holy Office, may have had access to this painting. However, the presence of Natives in SBO may correspond to a different form of commission that without the proper documentation it may never be able to be explained. For me one question that although may have not been fully clarified, is precisely the participation of Natives in autos-de-fé, after the sixteenth century. As shown in throughout this project, the Natives were judged under a different jurisdiction that limited and controlled the way they were to be treated and punished. If Natives were judged under a different jurisdiction, why were their trials so similar to inquisitorial procedures of public judgment?

The absence of other similar paintings to SBO in New Spain, and the lack of publications on the subject may seem to indicate that the public Native *auto* was a rare

occasion. However, as indicated in chapter one and two, *autos* against Natives began during the Episcopal Inquisition of the early 16th century. Many public *autos* against Natives, which mostly concluded in punishment by death, were common prior to the establishment of the inquisition in 1571. After an official office of the Novohispanic Inquisition was instituted in Mexico City, the trials seem to have been less common, but as noted in chapter two, the 18th century public *auto* may have been a practice very familiar to Native judicial affairs. Their presence as victims in public *autos* may have served the same purpose as any other *auto*; to create fear on the local population and to establish a hegemonic hierarchy of control visible to different members of colonial society. Also, considering the way Natives were judged in the sixteenth century, it is valid to assume that many of those practices continued throughout the entire colonial period. As such, SBO, while it can still be considered a unique painting due to the absence of other similar Novohispanic paintings, its subject matter is more common than generally referred to in contemporary scholarship.

Chapter one offers a background in which to begin analyzing the relationship the Spanish Inquisition had over Jews in Spain and later over Natives in the Americas. These socio-political relations helped me make sense on the formalization of the inquisition in Spain and its importance as the only common institution the Iberian Peninsula and New Spain had in the beginning of the colonial period. Furthermore, the historical analysis allowed me to understand the cruelty behind Natives in New Spain. The debates over the nature of Natives in New Spain helped the inquisition to judge the new encountered cultures as well as to control the abuse of inquisitorial power given to Mendicant orders in the sixteenth century. The historical analysis of both Natives and Jews in relation to

the inquisition help to clarify why Natives were treated the way they did in the sixteenth century. Also, this analysis assisted in my understanding of why some of those practices, such as public autos-de-fé, continued throughout the 18th century. Both groups' "nature" and subjectivities were being measured in regards to their capacity to convert. Such capacity quickly became a principal agent in which the inquisition measure their sins and the means they were to be judged in court and public *autos*.

As part of my formal analysis, many other components of the composition were separately analyzed in order to create a better interpretation as to how, why, and where the illustrated *auto* may have taken place. For example, by carefully looking at the mode the stage and the participants are arranged, I was able to connect the composition with previous Spanish examples. Moreover, these comparisons allowed me to formulate and answer questions concerning the live event. The public nature of the spaces where *autos* took place is present in the European paintings and in SBO. By way of analyzing the space of the composition and its location I was able to conclude on the necessary public nature of *autos* and their importance in colonial civic life. Furthermore, a trip to Villa Cuauhtémoc, formerly known as San Bartolome Otzolotepec, revealed the space where this and other autos may have taken place. The public nature of SBO's space is corresponding to the civil spaces where autos took place in both Spain and New Spain.

In addition, the Spanish illustrations most likely served as examples to other images of autos in the Americas. Most importantly, through the comparison of different auto-de-fé paintings I was able to observe how the Spanish Inquisition continued the practice of *autos* in New Spain in the same way, order, and fashion as they did in Europe. In the other hand, by observing the costumes of the victims, and by investigation the

origin of such attires, an interpretation on the supposed sins committed could be made. *Corozas*, *sambenitos*, candles, and canonical hats were worn with a very specific purpose. Each clothing item discloses the significance each and every detail of an *auto* had for the participants and spectators. These items show the gravity of the committed sin as well as serving as additional clues that added to the formation of fear and continuation of hegemonic power on the local population. Everything, from the selected space to the form of the canonical hats, had a specific meaning over the spectators. The careful analysis of each and one of these details in images such as SBO allows us to create better understanding on the historic meaning autos had over Novohispanic populations. Even the live viewers had the task of unfolding the meaning of these types of events. As such, the live event became a palimpsest of fear and power that was to be recreated in text and image in order to further its multi-layer meanings.

The meaning of the space where *autos* took place, the space of death, is an ever-changing process that begun prior to the Spanish conquest. The Aztec space of death, as explained in chapter three, had a great impact on the way the colonial spaces for public execution were chosen. The connotations of power and fear were being deciphered some time before the presence of the Peninsulars. Consequently, those who took over the city of Tenochtitlan, and the rest of New Spain, were to simply perpetuate meaning already established by the Aztecs. The space of death constitutes an important tool in which to analyze autos-de-fé. This concept aids in the comprehension of ideas about transparency of meaning imposed by such public spaces. The ambiguous space presented in SBO provoked a further analysis of the possible space used. Nevertheless, the conclusions reached after a careful analysis only reinstated the importance of historical meaning-

construction through civic participation in public performances of power and fear. In the case of SBO, the main plaza was the site for the illustrated auto. While its importance as a pre-Columbian public space is yet to be studied, its significance in colonial public affairs was made clear in this project.

The analysis of the space where the meaning of *autos* was constructed is an important tool in the analysis of SBO. The role public inquisitorial performances may not have had the same meaning without the recognition of the meaning of certain public spaces. In the case of Mexico City, the meaning of the public spaces where autos and public executions occurred, are borrowed from both, European and Mesoamerican traditions. Most importantly, the recognition of its value as powerful public arenas served as an example for the development of other spaces of death such as the one observed in *San Bartolome Otzolotepec*. Another important element of SBO is the dominant room given to its text, which its audience may relate to the rest of the visual components offered in the composition.

Unlike the text, the visual clues offered by SBO do not perpetuate the impact these events had on its victims. Instead, the image only re-establishes the importance of the forces that organized autos-de-fé in order to demonstrate their authoritative powers over the spectators of the live event. The text, which through my investigation became an essential part of the thesis, reveals a lot more about *autos* and Natives than a quick first glance may assume. While the text reiterates the importance of the visual clues it also reveals one of the principles behind the production of *auto* images in New Spain. The similarities between official 18th century accounts of Native autos-de-fé and the text of SBO create the notion that this painting may have been an illustrated account of an *auto*.

This only represents an interpretation due to the lack of official documentation validating such conclusions and interpretations. However, the lack of scholarship on the topic of colonial *autos* and images of this ceremony allow my perspectives room to be further investigated and discussed.

As the thesis progressed beyond the formal analysis of auto-de-fé images, which answered and posed many important questions regarding autos-de-fé ceremonies, it became clear how SBO represented the point of departure for all the analyzed problems. SBO elicited all the questions proposed in this thesis. It motivated questions of pictorial and performance reception explored through the differences and similarities between SBO and other Spanish examples. Additionally, by looking at each and one of the pictorial details of SBO, I was motivated to question issues dealing with Natives and their role in the procedures of the Novohispanic Inquisition. As I move to the Ph.D. level, I will continue to develop this project in order to answer some of the questions that due to time restrictions were left unanswered. A very important direction I will pursue is the use of psychoanalysis in order to offer an interpretation of the impact autos-de-fé had over Novohispanic populations.

With the use of psychoanalysis, I will attempt to explain how Spain was able to undermine the authority of its subjects through the performance of visual spectacles such as autos-de-fé. The present thesis mainly concentrates on the historical aspects and reasoning behind *autos* and their perspective images. However, the possible psychological impact on local Native populations, and the consequences on their role in Novohispanic society are yet to be studied. As well, while this thesis concentrates on

autos and their images in central New Spain, I hope to expand on the impact the inquisition had over Natives in New Mexico and Central America.

Walter Benjamin in his essay titled “Theses on the Philosophy of History” explores among other concepts the way history has been shaped to fit a norm that allows oppression and civil injustice. He argues that history is an image that goes by in an instant that can be recognized. After that instance, the image fades and past begins to form history whose clarity may never be seen again; “For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably.”¹⁷⁶ *Un Auto de Fe en el Pueblo de San Bartolome Otzolotepec* can be interpreted as one of those images that flashed through a moment of full identification that has been lost. Its purpose as a hegemonic image is not the same since the historic context into which it was created has completely changed. While the lost full recognition of its meaning may be partially recuperated through the aids of documentation, testimonies, and similar historical examples, its full role in history may never be deciphered. The role of SBO in colonial Latin American History is greater than my endeavor to place it in a more privileged position. Furthermore, the painting’s lost documentation makes the task to recuperate its full recognition a nearly impossible task.

While I recognized my limitations as a scholar, I am also aware of my role and responsibility as an historian. My project, while it carries restrictions due to my obvious disconnection to the colonial period, it also offers an interpretation that I believe is valid in the ongoing recognition of lost images of the past. SBO’s singularity over its Spanish predecessors places it in a position that must be furthered explored. The presence of

Natives in the composition proves that the historical norm can be broken in order to include different perspectives. These are historical insights that will help us make sense of an important side of otherwise unrecognizable images of the past. Benjamin in the same essay argues how oppression has been normalized to privileged those who practice it. He also contends that, “Not man or men but the struggling, oppressed class itself is the depository of historical knowledge.”¹⁷⁷ Understanding this is to recognize that SBO forms part of an unwritten history of Autos-de-Fé paintings. While the knowledge of its role in Novohispanic Inquisition history may have been forever lost, my thesis attempted to recognize and interpret its original meaning. Through the analysis of an *auto* as image, performance and its conceptual spatial dimensions a future dialogue can begin to recognize the importance of these events in Novohispanic societies. At the end, *Un Auto de fé en el Pueblo de San Bartolome Otzolotepec*, while it may be a Benjaminian unrecognizable moment of colonial Latin American history, it continues to be a palpable image that like any work of art, should not be ignored.

¹⁷⁶Benjamin, Walter, “Theses on the Philosophy of History” in *The Continental Philosophy Reader*, ed. Richard Kearney and Mara Rainwater (London: Routledge, 1996), 216.

¹⁷⁷Benjamin, Walter, “Theses on the Philosophy of History” in *The Continental Philosophy Reader*, ed. Richard Kearney and Mara Rainwater (London: Routledge, 1996), 220.

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