



Recovering the Written Traces of Hernando de Soto's Voyage to La Florida

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Abstract

In 1539, Hernando de Soto arrived in Cuba expecting to colonize the North American territory for Spain within four years. Even though he did not leave a personal account, several survivors of this expedition wrote about this journey. In addition to the official accounts of Rodrigo Rangel and Luis Hernández de Biedma, there were other anonymous accounts told and penned by common men, which were later used in canonical works. This is the case of Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's *The Florida of the Inca* (1605), which is based on a story that a Spanish cavalier related to the author, also corroborated by forgotten short accounts written by Juan Coles and Alonso de Carmona. Likewise, a Portuguese man, who accompanied de Soto, wrote *Relaçam Verdadeira*, published in 1557 in Portugal. *Relaçam* was translated into English in 1609 by the English writer Richard Hakluyt (1553-1616) under the title *Virginia Richly Valued*. This essay focuses on these collective testimonies, oral and written, that kept and shaped the story of failure in La Florida. I analyze how these intellectuals not only appropriated the previously dismissed memories of these common men, but also adapted them according to their imperialistic purposes.

Keywords: Empire, Garcilaso de la Vega, Hernando de Soto, La Florida, Richard Hakluyt

1. Introduction

In his *Historia general y natural de las Indias* (1535), Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, the first official chronicler of the Indies, narrates the adventures of Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de León and his arrival in an area of the New World that he named La Florida. In his narrative, Fernández de Oviedo focuses in particular on Ponce de León's vanity because, according to him, the explorer reached this land 'buscando aquella fuente de Bimini, que los indios avian dado á entender que hacia renovar é retoñesçer é refrescar la edad é fuerças del que bebia

ó se lavaba en aquella fuente' (1853, 621).¹ The chronicler's characterization of Ponce de León's naivety, since he was apparently deceived by indigenous people in his search for the so-called fountain of youth, undermines the importance of his accomplishments. Yet, despite his absurd belief in such a myth, Ponce de León's explorations were a great boon to the Spanish Empire because they expanded the territorial reach of the Spanish Crown to include much of what is today the southeastern part of the United States, which became incorporated into the Viceroyalty of New Spain.²

In the two and a half decades after Ponce de León first arrived in the region, at least three significant expeditions, including those of Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón (1526), Pánfilo de Narváez (1528) and Hernando de Soto (1539), ended in failure. As McGrath states, 'None of them found the great wealth they sought, but each contributed to the mystery of what might be found there' (2013, 407). One early traveler who furthered European curiosity with the wonders of La Florida was Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca (1485-1492-c. 1559), who was one of the four survivors of Narváez's 1527 shipwreck. For approximately eight years, Cabeza de Vaca and his three companions explored the southern region of what is today the United States, often walking around lost and naked (Cabeza de Vaca 2010, 77) and living among different, sometimes hostile, and other times friendly, groups of Native people. Upon his return to Spain in 1537, he told Charles V, king of Spain, that La Florida 'was the richest countrie [sic] of the world' ([Knight of Elvas] 1611, A2).³ Cabeza de Vaca hoped to return to La Florida as governor; however, the king had already conferred that position on Hernando de Soto (1500-1542).

At that point, de Soto had already experienced the riches of the New World. He landed in Central America as a teenager in 1514, soon becoming a skilled soldier; there he also met Francisco Pizarro, who later took him to South America (Blanton 2020, 1). After the capture of Atahualpa in Cajamarca in 1532, de Soto was rewarded for his participation in the fall of the Incan empire, receiving part of the ransom in gold that the Inca had paid to Pizarro in return for his freedom. When de Soto returned to Spain a very wealthy man, he was able to lend money to the emperor. In return, Charles V made him 'Governor of the Isle of Cuba, and Adelantado or President of Florida; with a title of Marques of certain part of the lands, that he should conquer' ([Knight of Elvas] 1611, 2). For this venture, the newly appointed governor and several other men invested the fortune they had gained in Peru, returning to the New World in 1539.⁴

¹ (looking for the fountain of Bimini, that the Indians had told him renews, revitalizes and refreshes the age and strength of whoever drinks from or washes themselves in those waters). Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

² Fernández de Oviedo's assessment of Ponce de León's enterprise also foreshadows the way Spaniards treated these new lands decades later. As John McGrath notes, 'Even as Cortez's [sic] conquest of Mexico reawakened Spanish hopes of finding vast riches in America, many rulers and merchants alike considered trade with Asia to be a higher priority than the discovery of new lands' (2013, 405). Since all the nautical endeavors of the time had already proved that La Florida did not offer a "Western Passage" into the Pacific' (406), the fact that it was not as rich a land as Mexico or Peru also made it less attractive to the Spanish Crown.

³ This translation has two editions; the second one appeared in 1611, but Hakluyt changed its title to *The Worthye and Famous History of the Traveiles, Discovery, & Conquest, of that Great Continent of Terra Florida*. I will use this edition when citing from Hakluyt.

⁴ Hernando de Soto arrived first in Cuba; after several months on the island, in 1539 he departed for Tampa Bay. As Ignacio Avellaneda explains, the exact number of people who accompanied him differs from author to author; however, it seems that an approximate number might be 650, including priests, navigators, royal officials, scribes, lawyers, blacksmiths, carpenters and other artisans (1997, 213-214). Charles Hudson has reconstructed de Soto's route, taking into account archeological and documentary information. He asserts that de Soto would have traveled through present-day Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, Missouri,

De Soto did not leave a personal account of his journey through La Florida; nevertheless, several survivors of the expedition wrote about the enterprise, giving details and describing failures. In addition to the official accounts of his personal secretary, Rodrigo Ranjel, and of Luis Hernández de Biedma, who had served as a factor in the expedition, there were other anonymous accounts told and penned by more ordinary figures, which were later used as primary sources for later canonical works.⁵ This is the case of a Portuguese man from the region of Elvas, who accompanied de Soto in his adventure to North American territory. This anonymous author, currently known as the Knight of Elvas, wrote *A relação verdadeira*, which was published in 1557 in Évora (Portugal). *A relação* was translated several times into English, the first of which was done in 1609 by the English writer Richard Hakluyt (1553-1616),⁶ under the title, *Virginia Richly Valued, by the Description of the Mainland of Florida*. Hakluyt, known for fiercely promoting the English colonization of North America through his writing, used de Soto's intention to 'seek another treasure, like that of *Atabalipa* in La Florida' ([Knight of Elvas] 1611, 54), to criticize Spanish greed. Forty-eight years later, also in Portugal, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1539-1616) published *La Florida del Inca* (1605), which is based on a story that an anonymous Spanish cavalier related to the author. His oral account is partially corroborated by the short and, until then, forgotten manuscripts written by two other soldiers on the expedition, Juan Coles and Alonso de Carmona. This production and circulation of narratives about La Florida in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries responded to a desire for eyewitness testimonies about a contested land where European empires hoped to extend their territorial dominance.

In this article I focus on the collective testimonies, both oral and written, that established and maintained the story of the Spanish empire's failure in La Florida. My work deals with what *La Florida del Inca* and *A relação verdadeira* (and the translations of this last work) tell us about the agendas of the authors and translators who, through their sources, constructed and reconstructed de Soto's adventures in North American territory. I analyze how these intellectuals not only appropriated the previously dismissed memories of these ordinary men, but also adapted them to shape their imperialistic purposes, which were to construct history and legitimize the Spanish presence in that territory, in Garcilaso's case, and in the case of Hakluyt, to advance British ambitions to colonize North America. While Garcilaso compiled the witnesses' memories playing heavily on the rhetorical device of him being only a 'scribe' and the eyewitness being the real author of his work, Hakluyt's approach is different. He translated a text that had been long published; however, 'The Epistle Dedicatorie' that he includes at the beginning of the book delineates the reason for translating this account, which is linked to his own ideological position. By analyzing the discursive appropriations and narrative strategies of both intellectuals, neither of whom set foot in La Florida, I show that the campaign to take control of this territory was not only military, but it was primarily discursive.

Louisiana, and Texas. For more information on the details of de Soto's trip, see Charles Hudson's map (1997, 320); also see Milanich 2006 and Blanton 2020.

⁵ Although Ranjel and Fernández de Biedma wrote accounts that began to circulate in the early 1540s, much earlier than the works of the Knight of Elvas and Garcilaso, both accounts were not printed until the nineteenth century. Ranjel's original account does not exist; however, it appeared embedded in Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo's *Historia general*, published for the first time in 1851 (Galloway 1997, 12). For more information on Ranjel's and Biedma's accounts, see Bourne's Editor's Introduction in *Narratives of the Career of Hernando de Soto* (1904, v-xx); see also the United States de Soto Expedition Commission 1939, 4-11.

⁶ Hakluyt studied Latin, Greek, Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Italian. These languages were very helpful at a time when travel accounts about the exploration of the New World were proliferating, especially in Spanish and Portuguese (Mancall 2007, 4).

Individuals seeking to record the past in the Iberian Peninsula inherited their traditions of history writing from the Ancient World. Historian Carlo Ginzburg asserts that ‘for the Greeks and Romans historical truth was based on *evidentia* (the Latin equivalent of *enargeia* proposed by Quintilian); for us, on evidence’ (2012, 12). For the Greeks, testimony regarding the events was a condition for historical discourse. The witness’s perspective, and the testimony of the eyewitness, prevailed over that of the one who only heard secondhand about the facts. In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle explains that human beings search for the truth by linking it to their natural desire for knowledge. He states, ‘not only with a view to action, but even when no action is contemplated, we prefer sight, generally speaking, to all the other senses. The reason for this is that of all the senses sight best helps us to know things, and reveals many distinctions’ ([980a] [21]). However, from the outset, there was no consensus on how to present historical evidence since, in many instances, there was no desire to reveal the whole truth of events. Ginzburg refers to Quintilian’s comments on this incompatibility, ‘“For he who desires to obscure the situation will state what is false in lieu of the truth, but must still strive to secure an appearance of palpability for the facts which he narrates” ’ (2012, 12). So, presenting the truth, or the appearance of truth, while narrating historical events became more a ‘question of persuasion, linked only marginally to an objective weighing of the facts’ (*ibid.*).

Columbus’ arrival to America contributed not only to European geographical expansion but also broadened European knowledge about the world, simultaneously transforming historiographical practices and their conventions (Subrahmanyam 2005, 28). During the sixteenth century, the written histories of the New World and its people, based on accounts left by travelers, soldiers, missionaries and others, created a sensation with European audiences. They were eager to know more about the composition of this fourth geographical area that was revolutionizing their well-established knowledge of a tripartite world. As a result, intellectuals were forced to rethink this assumption. At the same time, they had to think about how to write the history of this New World, which from the outset, following Greek historiographical tradition, ‘relied increasingly on the authority of the eyewitness during the decades that followed the discovery and conquest’ (Zamora 1988, 39). Margarita Zamora divides historical narrative into two categories:

the bookish histories written from a distance and lacking direct contact with the material, and those which challenged them based on the authority of eyewitness testimony, either as an attribute of the actual narrator of the account or of the privileged source on whose prerogative the validity of the history rests. (40)

In this context, knowledge of the Americas and its peoples came mainly from narratives of European incursion into foreign lands, written by the men who participated directly in the voyages to the New World and the colonization process. Their writings, known collectively as *crónicas de Indias*, were disseminated in the authors’ original languages. Many of them were also translated into other European languages and even depicted through images.

However, when competing with the bookish histories written by intellectuals who had never been outside of Europe, eyewitness writers faced another challenge: the question of their authority to present testimony. The Western conception of history depended heavily on alphabetic writing, and as such, its prominent representatives were a lettered elite who adhered strictly to the historiographical rules, models and theories of that time. The producers of ‘official history’, that is, the narratives that were ‘“approved” or “authorized” history, history that receives governmental sponsorship and support’ (Kagan 2009, 3), were familiar with theoretical treatises of Italian humanists such as Coluccio Salutati, Lorenzo Valla and Giovanni Pontano, as well as Spanish intellectuals like Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, Hernando del Pulgar and Juan Luis Vives,

among others.⁷ Yet, these humanist treatises, written by and for humanists and mostly written in Latin, were mainly out of reach of the common soldiers who traveled to the New World in search of fortune (Kohut 2009, 155).

Consequently, while the writers of these official histories depended heavily on centuries of knowledge, the early chroniclers of the Americas based their authority to write history on praxis and their personal experience as the protagonists of the events. This is the case for the soldiers who accompanied de Soto to La Florida, some of whom wrote their own accounts of the voyage. Other early chroniclers, as in the case of Garcilaso's informant, gave oral testimony of their deeds. Although these soldiers seemed unfamiliar with historiographic treatises, the intellectuals who used their stories were not. The narratives of these soldiers became official through the knowledge of the intellectuals who transformed their oral testimonies into history, as in the case of Garcilaso de la Vega. Likewise, the translators of *A relação verdadeira* tried to authorize the anonymous author's narrative by resorting to his *hidalguita* (chivalry) and nobility as proof of the Knight of Elvas' reliability. Thus, the Portuguese cavalier's written account was often contrasted with the oral testimony of Garcilaso's common soldier informant.

2. La Florida del Inca: *The Oral Testimony of a Common Soldier*

Divided into six books, *La Florida del Inca* relies mainly on the testimonies of one soldier, whom Garcilaso calls 'my author' but never mentions by name. The identity of the informant was a mystery for a long time. Only at the beginning of the twentieth century did scholars start paying attention to Garcilaso's anonymous source, concluding that the soldier's name was Gonzalo Silvestre. Edward Gaylor Bourne, in *Narratives of the Career of Hernando de Soto*, published in 1904, states:

I venture to conjecture that he was the cavalier named Gonçalo Silvestre, whose experiences in the expedition are narrated in considerable detail. In fact, in Garcilaso's narrative only de Soto himself, his successor, Luis de Moscoso, and Juan de Añasco receive as frequent notice as Gonçalo Silvestre, who is not even mentioned by the "Gentleman of Elvas." After the expedition was over Gonçalo Silvestre went to Peru. About the year 1555 he returned to Spain in poverty. (ix)⁸

The years that Silvestre spent in Peru coincided with the period when Garcilaso, who was a teenager in 1555, was still living in his native land, and where they apparently met. Recent research such as that of José Miguel Martínez Torrejón corroborates Bourne's speculation regarding the informant's identity. In 2021, Martínez Torrejón published 'Epítome del descubrimiento de la tierra de la Florida', written by Garcilaso himself shortly after 1596, when he was seeking support for the publication of *La Florida* (14).⁹ It is only in this text that Garcilaso mentions Gonzalo Silvestre as the source for his book (2021, 14).

In the 'Proemio al lector', *El Inca* lists his sources and describes the efforts he made to write a book that had been in preparation for a very long time. Garcilaso states:

⁷ For more information on how these historiographical treatises influenced the writing of 'official history' and their possible intersection with the writers of the *crónicas de Indias*, see Kohut 2009.

⁸ In 1903, a year prior to Bourne's publication, R.B. Cunninghame Graham, using the information about Silvestre that Garcilaso provided in *La Florida*, wrote an account of the soldier's adventures in the de Soto enterprise (see Cunninghame Graham 1912).

⁹ The 'Epítome' appears in *Los pre-textos de La Florida del Inca*.

Conversing over a long period of time and in different places with a great and noble friend of mine who accompanied this expedition to Florida, and hearing him recount numerous very illustrious deeds that both Spaniards and Indians performed in the process of the conquest, I became convinced that when such heroic actions as these had been performed in this world, it was unworthy and regrettable that they should remain in perpetual oblivion. Feeling myself therefore under obligation of two races, since I am the son of a Spanish father and an Indian mother, I many times urged this cavalier to record the details of the expedition, using me as his amanuensis. (de la Vega 1951, xxxvii)¹⁰

This statement confirms Garcilaso's familiarity with historiographical models and theories for history writing at that time. Following these models, which were influenced by Greek philosophers who privileged the authority of the eyewitness in recounting the past, Garcilaso highlights Silvestre's credibility. His main informant and friend is not only trustworthy, but also a noble hidalgo, who 'as such prided himself on speaking the truth in all matters' (xxxviii). By aligning Silvestre's lineage with moral values, the author grants authority to his work. Furthermore, Garcilaso reinforces his oral informant's reliability by noting that the Royal Council of Indies had called upon Silvestre on several occasions as a trustworthy witness to corroborate certain facts about the events that occurred during the expedition of La Florida and other endeavors in which he took part (xxxviii-xxxix). This fact makes Silvestre's knowledge official and cements his credibility in the process of history writing.

Regarding Silvestre's deeds in the New World, Garcilaso states that 'He was a very fine soldier, performing frequently as a leader; and since he participated in each of the events of the conquest, he was able to supply me with complete details of the history as they occurred' (xxxix).¹¹ Silvestre's status as a soldier and active participant in the events in La Florida is also problematic because 'watching and fighting cannot well be carried on simultaneously' (*ibid.*). Garcilaso anticipates the criticism that his work will receive, as others attempt to undermine its credibility. Using his own experience on the battlefield (Garcilaso joined the Spanish army to fight in the Rebellion of Alpujarras [1568-1571]), he states that during conflict it is very common 'to relate the most notable events of a battle afterward in the presence of the general and the other officers' (*ibid.*). Garcilaso also explains that when someone talked about 'a very brave deed which was difficult to believe, those who heard him went out to see what actually had been done and to verify the report with their own eyes' (*ibid.*). Once more, Garcilaso privileges the sense of sight, equating it with truth as a way of authorizing his source and the veracity of that testimony.¹²

To demonstrate the importance of this project and the extent of his dedication to it, Garcilaso also relates the chronology and different places where he has had to compile his narrative. Garcilaso explains that, despite his and his informant's desire to write de Soto's story, there were several difficulties. Both friends had not seen each other in a long time; furthermore, Garcilaso had joined the Spanish army and had gone to war. Moreover, after delaying this undertaking for twenty years, he decided to move to Silvestre's town to serve him as a scribe of his memories (xxxvii). Finally, to preserve the true facts of the expedition, Garcilaso corroborates Silvestre's account with other primary written testimonies by eyewitnesses. As such, he introduces the

¹⁰ All the quotes from *La Florida* come from the translation of the book by John G. Varner and Jeannette Varner (de la Vega 1951).

¹¹ While recounting Silvestre's protagonism in the expedition, Cunningham Graham points out that 'on his arrival in Florida, Gonçalo quickly went to work. Sent with a squadron under Captain Baltasar de Gallegos, he formed part of the first expedition to the interior of the land' (1912, 204).

¹² For a more complete analysis of the relationship between the tongue and the eye in the process of history writing in Garcilaso's work, see Egan 2018.

testimony of Alonso de Carmona, from the village of Priego. Like Silvestre, Carmona also went to Peru after six years spent in La Florida. When he returned to his homeland, he wrote an account of these two 'peregrinations, as he called them' (xxxix).¹³ Afterward, he sent his writings to Garcilaso for him to examine them. The Inca describes Carmona's testimony as 'brief and without order as to time and events and with a few exceptions without names of provinces, does tell, by skipping from one place to another, the most notable events of our history' (xxxix-xl).

Likewise, brevity and disorganization are the characteristics of the narrative of Juan Coles, another soldier who related his experiences of the expedition. Coles wrote at the request of the Franciscan friar Pedro Aguado, who, to better serve the king, 'had gathered many diverse accounts from trustworthy people concerning the discoveries they had seen accomplished in the New World, and he had made a particular collection of stories about the first exploration of the Indies' (xl). Unfortunately, Aguado, while busy with other missions, apparently left a very rough draft of the works he had compiled at a printer's shop in Córdoba. Garcilaso found Coles' account there, 'very badly treated and ... half-consumed by moth and rats' (*ibid.*). He clarifies that by the time he found Coles' testimony, he had already finished writing *La Florida*. Nevertheless, this happy discovery served to corroborate that everything Silvestre had told him was accurate. As a result, Garcilaso was compelled to include Carmona's and Coles' names and testimonies because 'presenting two witnesses who confirmed the statements of my own author, I would show that all three accounts were really one and the same' (*ibid.*). Although the Inca was aware of the flaws in the narratives written by Carmona and Coles, he also acknowledged their contribution to his project since both accounts helped to substantially reinforce the authority of his eyewitness.

Garcilaso reveals his awareness of the act of history writing in his critique of Coles' and Carmona's accounts. Carmona's is a perfect example of a narrative by an author more interested in recounting his adventures for the entertainment of a few acquaintances, describing the novelties he had seen and experienced in the New World, than in engaging in a serious historiographic exercise. Garcilaso confirms that this was Carmona's objective when he sent him his manuscript, considering that they had probably known each other since their time in Peru. Furthermore, Garcilaso attributes Coles' and Carmona's errors in writing to the fact that they wrote about their firsthand experiences without any intention of publishing them, or at least not doing so under their own names. Thus, in the case of Coles, the Inca speculates that the failure to organize his narrative 'in a historical manner' is because the manuscript was intended to be published anonymously. Garcilaso deems Coles' account to be written in a 'legal style', in which the soldier recounts 'what he remembered more as an eyewitness than as the author of the work, believing [that fray Aguado] who had asked for the story would arrange it suitably for printing' (xli). Garcilaso also explains that in these two very short narratives, the authors omitted essential details, such as the locations and other important incidents in which they did not participate. However, despite these flaws, they contribute to corroborating specific facts related to the events in which Coles and Carmona did participate, and that are important to prove the veracity of Silvestre's testimony (xlii). Furthermore, including these soldiers and their testimonies is also Garcilaso's way of recognizing other participants of de Soto's expedition, an enterprise in which people from several parts of Europe took part.

¹³ Note here the vocabulary that the soldier Carmona uses to portray his adventures in the New World as a religious enterprise rather than an economic and military one.

3. A relação verdadeira: *Nobility and Intellectual Authority*

Among a group of Portuguese cavalier hidalgos (xxxvi) who departed from the region of Elvas was the author of *A relação verdadeira dos trabalhos que ho Governador Dom Fernando de Souto e certos fidalgos portugueses passaram no descobrimento da provincia da Frolida. Agora novamente feita per hum fidalgo d'Elvas foi impressa pela primeira vez em casa de André de Burgos* (1557). At the time when Garcilaso was writing *La Florida*, the Knight of Elvas' book was the only account of de Soto's travels through La Florida that was already in print. It is possible that Garcilaso may have been familiar with it because he arrived in Europe in 1560, only three years after its publication, and his first stop was Portugal (Martínez Torrejón 2019, 138).¹⁴ *A relação* appeared only fourteen years after the survivors of de Soto's voyage arrived in Mexico in 1543. The book contains only brief details about the Portuguese men's participation in that voyage. Moreover, there is no indication of who the author is since he preferred to remain anonymous. *A relação verdadeira* was reedited in its original language for the first time in 1844 under the title *Relação do descobrimento da Florida*. Its editor, Joaquim da Costa de Macedo, wrote the introduction in which he deals with the question of authorship, a matter to which he had devoted extensive archival research. Costa de Macedo reports that, despite his efforts to determine the author's identity among the survivors of the expedition and those who were still alive by 1557, this had become an impossible task by the time *A relação* was published (Mateus Ventura 1998, 13).

The reedition of *A relação* in Portuguese in the nineteenth century contrasts with its popularity in other languages; for example, between 1609 and before 1940 it had been translated into English, French, and Dutch (Mateus Ventura 1998, 14). In the most recent Portuguese reedition of the book, Maria da Graça Mateus Ventura notes that its wide dissemination outside of Portugal is due not so much to its wealth of information but rather to it appearing before other accounts not published until decades later (*ibid.*). The earliest translation into English is Richard Hakluyt's, who titled it *Virginia Richly Valued By the description of the maine land of Florida ... Written by a Portugall gentleman of Elvas*, published in 1609 (Knight of Elvas 1609). The translation was produced at a critical moment for England's ambitions in the New World, with the purpose of 'encourage[ing] the young colony in Virginia, and to procure an increase of support for that undertaking, at a period when its chances of prosperity were but precarious' (Rye 1851, i-ii). This translation was re-edited only two years later, but with a different title, *The VVorthye and Famous History, of the Travailles, Discouery, & Conquest, of that great Continent of Terra Florida* ([Knight of Elvas] 1611). As one of the main promoters of the establishment of the first English settlement in North America, Hakluyt felt compelled to change the title 'as a fresh temptation to adventurers, and to stimulate the exertions of the colonists themselves' (Rye 1851, iii). Moreover, rather than Virginia, the new title emphasizes La Florida, more than likely because the book has little to do with Virginia. With the changes in the title, any mention of its author, the Gentleman of Elvas, or Knight of Elvas, also disappears. The disappearance of the Knight of Elvas from this translation reflects the relatively small amount of importance that the translator conferred upon the original author; even in his prologue to the first edition, Hakluyt does not spend any time discussing the identity of the Portuguese soldier who wrote *A relação*.

¹⁴ In 'The Incestuous Soto Narratives', Patricia Galloway demonstrates the relations of dependence, which she calls 'a unidirectional chain of influence' (1997, 11), linking *A relação verdadeira*, Rodrigo Ranjel's account and Garcilaso's *La Florida*. For Galloway it is very likely that Ranjel's account was fundamental for *A relação*, which later influenced Garcilaso's book. The critic concludes that this chain of influence does not mean 'that there is nothing genuine or original in these latter two works; just that what is new has little to do with Indians and can only be discerned after careful historiographical criticism' (39).

Critics have long opined on the matter of authorship, but they have given little attention to the author's identity. Instead, they have focused on comparing *A relação* with *La Florida del Inca*. These comparisons have mainly dealt with matters such as the credibility of the sources for each text. Besides Hakluyt's translation of the Knight of Elvas' account, there were other translations of this work into English. According to William Rye, an anonymous version appeared in 1686 that '[was] very inferior to that of Hakluyt, and erroneous as to numbers, distances, and names of places' (1851, iv). Titled *A Relation of the Invasion and Conquest of Florida by the Spaniards*, it was not translated directly from Portuguese but from a French edition published the previous year (*ibid.*). In the preface of *A Relation of the Invasion*, the anonymous translator declares the superiority of the Knight of Elvas' narrative over *La Florida del Inca*, 'not only [sic] for its Rarity, but for the Merit of its Author' (Gentleman of Elvas 1686, A4). To this, the author adds that *A relação* has 'the advantage to be an Original, and to come from the first hand [participant]' (*ibid.*). This statement is a critique of Inca Garcilaso, who, despite working with three different versions of the story of the expedition, was not an eyewitness himself.¹⁵

Unlike Hakluyt in the first two translations, using the very brief details in *A relação*, the anonymous translator of the 1686 edition pays more attention to the identity of the Knight of Elvas. In arguing the credibility of the Portuguese author, the anonymous translator says:

The Title of the Relation informs us, that our Author was a *Portuguese* Gentleman of the town of *Elvas*, and that he accompanied *Soto* in all that Expedition. He is certainly one of those who are named in the second Chapter, though he cannot be particularly known, since he has been unwilling to name or any other way distinguish himself from the rest; and that instance of a modesty which is not to be found but amongst men of the best breeding, is a very good voucher for his sincerity. (Gentleman of Elvas 1686, A4v)

Like Garcilaso in his preface, the anonymous author of *A Relation of the Invasion* grants authority to the Knight of Elvas by using his lineage and equating it with moral values. However, if for Garcilaso his informant stood out for being a *hidalgo noble* and was therefore trustworthy, the anonymous translator discredits Silvestre, Garcilaso's source, for being nothing more than a simple private trooper. Therefore, when comparing the status of both men, the translator concludes, 'it is to be observed, that a Gentleman, as he was, hath commonly more knowledge and a greater respect for Truth, than a private Souldier [sic]' and that would be possible since 'It is very probable that his Birth and Quality made him to be admitted into the most important Councils and Deliberations; and the particular account he gives of them, is sufficient to confirm this Opinion' (Gentleman of Elvas 1686, A5).¹⁶ Taking at face value that the Portuguese author defines himself as a *caballero* in *A relação*, the translator concludes that this anonymous knight's moral values and the privileges of his lineage put him in a position of authority to tell the truth, a necessary condition for writing history. More recent scholars, such as Patricia Galloway, disagree with the critics who attributed

¹⁵ In other accounts, defenses of Garcilaso's credibility concern the origin of the authors and their loyalty to the empires to which they belonged. This is the case of Theodore Irving who, in the preface of *Conquest of Florida*, compares both narratives and their sources, finding that Garcilaso has more credibility because, 'the Spanish cavalier from whom he derived his principal information being more likely to be admitted to the intimate councils of his commander than one of a different nation, and being free from the tinge of national jealousy which may have influenced the statements of the Portuguese' (cited in Rye, 1851 xxx).

¹⁶ Several passages in which important decisions were made, according to the Portuguese author, contradict this speculation that he was part of de Soto's inner circle. For example, when de Soto is on his deathbed, he gathers all the more prominent people to advise them about his successor and inform them of his final wishes. The author does not include himself as an eyewitness to this event, but instead uses the third person plural to narrate what de Soto told them to do ([Knight of Elvas] 1611, 128-129).

credibility to the Knight of Elvas solely on the basis of his rank and chivalry. For Galloway, the lack of serious studies of *A relação*, not only from a literary but also from a historical perspective, makes 'such facile evaluations ... at best premature and at worst flawed' (1997, 18).¹⁷

As shown in these cases, the concepts of nobility, chivalry and *hidalgúia* had significant implications for the writing of history. Chivalry, a concept that in Western culture was associated with 'loyalty, gallantry, adventure, friendship, civil life, and honor' (Rodríguez-Velasco 2010, 1), was also broadly associated with purity of blood. However, in the fifteenth century works such as *Espejo de verdadera nobleza* by Diego de Valera advocates for 'a new social and ethical paradigm ... his revaluation of virtue and nobility has a clear target: to promote the public good, as well as personal recognition and social advancement based on merit' (Peters 2020, 310). The characteristics of these merit-based nobles were connected with 'virtue, erudition, and civic-minded moral education founded on classical models: the new noble, therefore, is defined according to his moral character and personal conduct' (311). In the cases of Garcilaso's informant and the Knight of Elvas, both individuals share several of these characteristics, which were essential to authorize their reliability, and, at the same time, the narratives written around them used their deeds as sources of didactic instruction.

4. Floridian People Seen Through European Eyes

The question of lineage as a measure of credibility applies not only to the eyewitnesses who accompanied de Soto to La Florida. It reappears when Garcilaso refers to his own noble heritage as the Peruvian son of a royal indigenous woman and noble Spanish father. He establishes himself as a lettered man, knowledgeable regarding the methods of Western historiography and familiar with other languages and cultures. He shows his intellectual capabilities in his activities as a translator of *Dialoghi d'amore* by León Hebreo and as a commentator of the history of his native Peru which, at that time, as he declares, was a work in progress (de la Vega 1951, xliii-xliv).¹⁸ Since the competence to tell the truth is paired with noble origins, he uses his own background to show what he had witnessed from his privileged position regarding the Spanish expansion into his native land. Moreover, as a subject living through that political expansion, Garcilaso states that he feels compelled to write about de Soto's adventures because of his biracial heritage (xxxvii). Therefore, the act of writing is also an act of loyalty to the Spanish crown, and at the same time, the multicultural perspective he offers accredits him as a proper cultural translator, a more prominent role than that of the amanuensis which he claims to have while writing *La Florida*.

The eyewitnesses of the expedition to La Florida who are the source of information for *A relação* and *La Florida*, the Knight of Elvas, Silvestre, Coles and Carmona, were, like the majority of the members of the expedition, Europeans and first-time travelers to the New World. Therefore, they interpreted what they saw according to 'the modern Western episteme [which] not only established itself as universal, but subjected indigenous knowledges by relegating them to the domains of superstition and witchcraft' (Rabasa 1995, 84). In this regard, Garcilaso, as a person who shared two cultures, establishes himself as a mediator. However, his ambivalent position, as Lisa Voigt

¹⁷ In explaining the lack of a comprehensive study of *A relação*, Galloway also points out that the scholar who had compared Ranjel's account with the Knight of Elvas' book failed to address the issue of intertextuality. For her, it is necessary to further consider the role of André de Burgos, the publisher of *A relação*, and the issue of the book trade in the sixteenth century (1997, 19).

¹⁸ Curiously, Garcilaso never calls himself an author of his works. Instead, he is a translator (*Dialoghi d'amore*), a scribe (*La Florida*), and a compiler (*Comentarios reales*).

explains, ‘is neither that of the imperial authority who demands news about the New World nor of the resistance subaltern who repudiates the demand. *La Florida del Inca* both draws on and takes the place of the conquistadors’ eyewitness account of the region’ (2009, 103). Garcilaso highlights his position from the beginning; not only by repeatedly calling himself an Indian, but also by including Floridian Natives from very early on, most specifically in the title of his work, *The Florida of the Inca. A history of the Adelantado, Hernando de Soto, Governor and Captain of the kingdom of Florida, and of other the heroic Spanish and Indian cavaliers, written by The Inca, Garcilaso de la Vega, an officer of His Majesty, and a native of the great city of Cuzco, capital of the realms and provinces of Peru*. This gesture signals that *La Florida* relates the story of the prominent conquistador, but also focuses on the deeds of the ordinary men referred to as ‘Spanish and Indian cavaliers’.

Considering that European travel narratives during the sixteenth century depicted indigenous people by relegating them to the category of savages, and taking into account the exclusively European conception of chivalry, it is unusual to see Spanish and Native people sharing the epithet ‘cavalier’ in the title of *La Florida*. However, this categorization shows Garcilaso’s understanding of historiography. If, on the one hand, following Aristotelian principles and influenced by historians of ancient times, he is obsessed with truth, on the other he is also inspired by a tradition of Spanish chronicles, which are ‘rich repositories of myth, legend, and archetype’ (Dowling 1997, 101). Lee Dowling explains how Garcilaso departed from the factual and sometimes dry discourses promoted by the historians of the medieval period in favor of ‘the development of the historical subject within a fully discursive narrative format’ (100). This fact becomes evident in the way Garcilaso draws on European images and topoi that highlight poetic motifs. Such is the case of cacique Vitacucho’s speech, whose eloquence, according to Garcilaso, was comparable to that of the Italian Renaissance poets Ariosto and his predecessor, Count Matheo Maria Boiardo, authors of *Orlando furioso* and *Orlando innamorato*, respectively (de la Vega 1951, 133). Besides these epic references, there are also allusions to Roman history. For instance, when describing the meeting between de Soto and the Lady of Cofachiqui, the Inca compares this encounter to Trajan’s description of the majestic Cleopatra when she ‘went forth to receive Marc Anthony on the river Cyndnus in Cicilia’ (299). In this manner, Garcilaso shows that he is up to date with the way of writing history in the culture of his time, ‘A culture which through its emphasis on the creative element of history writing implicitly placed imaginative historical prose, poetry and drama alongside the factual accounts of royal chroniclers or the dispatches of diplomatic envoys as so many specimens of the *ars historica*’ (Kluge 2022, x).

Regarding epic poetry, critics such as Dowling consider that Alonso de Ercilla’s epic poem *La araucana* (1569) may have had a significant influence on the writing of *La Florida*. Not only is *La araucana* closer to Garcilaso’s time, but it also deals with the same topic of the Spanish conquest attempt in the New World. Dowling suggests that ‘While Ercilla, like Garcilaso, never ceases to ringingly endorse providential imperialism ... it is a fact that his indigenous characters clearly outshine the ones of his own race, at times even assuming an unmistakable moral superiority’ (1997, 112). Indeed, Garcilaso also includes several episodes in which he highlights the honorable character of Floridian people. One of them appears in the story of Juan Ortiz, a native of Seville, who spent twelve years in captivity in La Florida after being captured while searching for Pánfilo de Narváez. When his current captor, cacique Mucoço, learns about de Soto’s arrival in the region, he summons Ortiz. The cacique, who had saved Ortiz from the fury of Hirrihigua, his first captor, frees Ortiz, reminding him how he had offered him his friendship and protection over the years. In return, Mucoço requests that Ortiz tell de Soto not to harm him or his people while, at the same time, welcoming de Soto and extending his friendship to him (de la Vega 1951, 76).

In contrast, in the Knight of Elvas' narrative, the author does not focus much on Ortiz's captivity. Instead, the reader briefly learns the main details of how he was captured, and the hardships he went through while living with Hirrihigua, who in *A relação* is called Ucita, in accordance with the name of his chiefdom. Later, the Knight of Elvas narrates Ortiz's escape from his first cruel captor and explains why he remained in the friendly territory of Muçoço. The focus of the Portuguese author is on how Ortiz was rescued, which was very advantageous for the travelers because, from there on, he served them as an interpreter. Garcilaso instead offers many more details, which help to contextualize the character of Indigenous people. For example, while talking about Hirrihigua's cruel treatment of Ortiz, which, according to the Knight of Elvas, was because they worshipped the devil ([Knight of Elvas] 1611, 23), Garcilaso explains that his mistrust is the result of the violence he and his people had endured when Pánfilo de Narváez had first arrived in their land. Hirrihigua had direct experience of the Spaniards' cruelty since they had cut off his nose and 'had cast his mother to the dogs and permitted them to feed upon her body' (de la Vega 1951, 68). None of these details are explained in *A relação*, leading the reader to merely speculate about Hirrihigua's viciousness.

As well as providing additional details about all these aspects, Garcilaso offers more insights into the nature of Ortiz's captors. For example, he gives prominence to Muçoço, whom he holds in high regard. Commenting on the cacique's gesture towards Ortiz as he was allowed to reunite with the Spaniards, Garcilaso affirms that,

although a barbarian, [Muçoço] behaved towards this Christian in a manner far different from that of the famous Triumvirate of Laino (a place near Bologna), which made a never sufficiently abominated proscription and agreement to exchange relatives, friends, and protectors for enemies and adversaries. And, too, his behavior was much more admirable than that of other Christian princes who since then have made bargains equally odious, if not more so, when one considers the innocence of those delivered up, the rank of some of them, and the fidelity which their deliverers should have had and respected. For the betrayed were infidels, whereas their betrayers took pride in the name and doctrines of Christianity. Violating the laws and statues of pagan realms disrespecting the very existence and rank of kings and great princes, and valuing even less their sworn and promised fidelity (a thing and word of such name), these Christians, solely to avenge their anger, exchanged people who had not offended them for those who had, thus giving up the innocent for the guilty. (73-74)

Garcilaso thus equates the Floridian natives with the heroes of the European tradition of epic poetry, and the dignity and nobility with which he characterizes them elevate the Spanish actions in La Florida since they are fighting equally heroic people. Thus, considering Garcilaso's locus of annunciation as an 'Indian', as he proudly describes himself, and considering that his writing of history is an act of fidelity to the Spanish crown, we can better understand Garcilaso's *mestizo* position as an intellectual living between two worlds and cultures.

This intersection of race and culture, his multiculturalism, makes him more than a compiler and scribe of history. As Voigt suggests, Garcilaso

goes beyond simply providing news of Florida to serve the cause of imperial and religious expansion. He also accounts for the imperial violence that has left the province in "desolation," provoking, in turn, the "rage and cruelty" of the Floridians toward the Spanish missionaries. Nevertheless, Garcilaso concludes this episode—and the volume—by calling for Christian mercy rather than justifying revenge. (2009, 104)

Garcilaso's role as a cultural mediator makes him capable of translating the frustration, and at the same time, explaining the rage and cruelty of the Floridian inhabitants, otherwise described in other accounts as savages.

Furthermore, as discussed by Voigt, this humanizing approach towards indigenous people comes from Garcilaso's multicultural and multilingual background. Nevertheless, Portuguese travelers from the Elvas region were not entirely strangers to other cultures either. Garcilaso maintains that some of them 'had fought on the African frontiers' (de la Vega 1951, 22);¹⁹ in fact, the anonymous Knight's familiarity with Africa appears in the final chapter of *A relação*. There he talks about the great diversity of flora and fauna in La Florida, stating that 'There be many wild hennes as big as turkies, padridges small like those of Africa, cranes, duckes, pigeons, thrushes, and parrows' ([Knight of Elvas] 1611, 179). Perhaps the mention of the size of the African partridge comes from common knowledge, or perhaps the Knight of Elvas had been in Africa, as well as the rest of his fellow travelers. However, his exposure to other cultures is different from Garcilaso's multicultural upbringing and subaltern epistemic formation. Scholars have pointed out that Garcilaso's American origins were not only a factor in the humanization and empathy with the Floridian people but also contributed to the authority of his own writing (Rabasa, 1995, 91; Voigt 2009, 103). This credibility to write about the New World can be seen in Garcilaso's details about the Floridian inhabitants, which contrast sharply with the approach taken by the Knight of Elvas.²⁰

In *A relação*, there is an extensive description of the land and its nature; however, the encounters between the different caciques and the Spaniards are less detailed and even generalized to the point that many of them seem formulaic. In most episodes, the caciques' welcoming speeches start with words of admiration for the Spaniards, a pledge of allegiance and even a request not to hurt them. This is the case of the Indian lord Patofa; de Soto meets him after passing 'through a towne, the lord whereof was named Cosaqui' ([Knight of Elvas] 1611, 46). Patofa, who had found out ahead of time about de Soto's arrival, utters upon meeting him,

Mightie lord, now with good reason I will crave of fortune to requite this my so great prosperitie with some small adversitie; and I will count myselve verie rich, seeing I have obtained that, which in this world I most desired, which is, to see, and be able to doe your lordship some service. (*ibid.*)

Moreover, Patofa ends his speech in a very docile manner by offering, 'For mine owne part, from my very heart with reverence due to such a prince, I offer my selfe unto your Lordship, and beseech you, that in reward of this my true good will, you will vouchsafe to make use of mine owne person, my Countrie, and subjects' (46-47). These lengthy speeches are repeated in every town de Soto visited with almost the same structures, except for the two caciques who do not welcome the Spaniards.²¹ For Galloway, these discourses are only 'literary devices, not real

¹⁹ This is not something that the Knight of Elvas mentions in his account; however, this detail contributes to a better understanding of the Portuguese travelers, about whom we have little information. Garcilaso includes this detail when describing their departure from Sanlúcar de Barrameda for La Florida: 'In the *Buena Fortuna*, a galleon just like the *Concepción*, Captain Andrés de Vasconcelos, a native cavalier of Yelves, traveled with a very splendid and brilliant company of Portuguese gentlemen, some of whom had fought on the African frontiers' (de la Vega 1951, 22).

²⁰ Nonetheless, Garcilaso has been criticized for his pompous language (Rye 1851, v), in contrast with the Knight of Elvas' style, which William B. Rye has deemed as 'natural, plain, and without ornaments, such as the stile [sic] of a discourse ought to be' (vi). Rye, a nineteenth-century historian with a completely different concept of history, also adds that the Knight of Elvas 'never wanders from his subject into useless digressions, as Garcilaso de la Vega doth' (*ibid.*). The Knight of Elvas' direct style has an impact on his view of the Natives and his lack of recognition of them as human beings.

²¹ One of them is cacique Casqui, who offers gifts to the newcomers as he recognizes their power, telling them that 'although you came into my countrie, killing and taking captives the inhabitants thereof and my subjects: yet I determined to conforme my will unto yours' ([Knight of Elvas] 1611, 95). Another cacique who offers 'a most

speeches. Because the speeches reproduce conventions of *European* feudal power, and because they are so conventional, we will never know from them what kind of power—if any—southeastern *caciques* wielded over their people' (1997, 20). Indeed, these speeches not only annul the *caciques*' agency, but also show the lack of cultural understanding on the part of the Europeans.

Garcilaso also narrates these encounters; however, his version is more extended and different, demonstrating a better comprehension of the structure and complexity of indigenous societies. According to Garcilaso's informant, after departing the province of Achalaque, de Soto traveled to the neighboring province of Cofa. From there, he and his people went to the Cofaqui province, governed by Cofa's elder brother, 'a man who was richer and more powerful than his kinsman' (de la Vega 1951, 273), warned by his brother and by one of de Soto's messengers, who was sent there to solicit the curaca's friendship,²² Cofaqui prepared himself for their arrival 'in the company of many noblemen magnificently arrayed with bows and arrows and large feathers as well as rich mantles and marten and various other skins, which were as nicely dressed as the best of those to be found in Germany' (275). After a very friendly exchange, during which the Spaniards received plenty of welcome gifts, de Soto informed Cofaqui about his intention to go to another province called Cofachiqui, for which Cofaqui offered supplies and assistance. With this assistance, the natives were trying to gain de Soto's favor and protection since they had been enemies with the Cofachiqui people for generations. Therefore, curaca Cofaqui summoned an 'Indian *apu* (which in the language of Peru means the captain general of supreme in any office) whose name was Patofa' (278). By comparing the societal structure with the one in his native Peru, Garcilaso presents another version of the story. According to the Knight of Elvas, Patofa was the lord of his land. Instead, in *La Florida*, Garcilaso clarifies that he is a general in charge of defending Cofaqui's land and honor. Moreover, he does not make any direct speech welcoming de Soto; rather, he pledges to avenge his people with the help of the Spaniards (279). In his portrait of the people of La Florida, Garcilaso underscores their resemblance to Europeans by highlighting the nobility of Mucoço, the splendor of Cofaqui, who, to receive his visitors, dressed in the elegant manner of the Germans. Moreover, he reveals his own association with, and understating of, native cultures by drawing a parallel with Peruvian society and its power structures.

As my analysis highlights, the writings about La Florida that are part of this study are fragments of memories, penned not by official historians, but written and told by common people and later refashioned by intellectuals knowledgeable about historiographic methods. The editors and translators of *A relação verdadeira* in the early seventeenth century show us how their roles were intertwined with those of the travelers and merchants during the formative years of the British Empire; in that regard, historical narrative was another form of imperialism. William Sherman highlights the role of translation of foreign travel literature during a time when England was lagging behind its continental rivals. In this context, he states, 'As travellers [sic] made contact with new regions and peoples, authors and editors translated the world for an audience at home that was increasingly eager to hear news of the wider world and to reflect on England's place in it' (2004, 205). As such, Sherman, following other critics, compares the market for travel books with the demand for other commodities, such as 'sugar, tobacco, spices

wittie and stout answer' is the *cacique* of Quigalta, who does not want to receive de Soto unless he proves that he is the child of the sun, as he has affirmed all along. He asks de Soto to show his powers and to dry up the river (124).

²² Garcilaso prefers to use the word *curaca*, a term used in Quechua to define a community's leader. After the Spanish invasion the term *cacique* became the designation for such leaders, who also became the representatives of Indigenous people before the Spanish authority.

and silk' (*ibid.*). The success that *A relação verdadeira* enjoyed in English translation, based on the number of times it was reedited, confirms that the information it offered was attractive to possible settlers. *Virginia richly valued*, the original title of the first English translation, which appeared only two years after the establishment of the first permanent English colony in North America, reflects Hakluyt's desire to invigorate this struggling endeavor.

Indeed, Hakluyt, the first translator of the Portuguese account, in his dedication 'To the Right Honorable, the Right Worshipfull Counsellors, and others cheerefull adventurors for the advancement of that Christian and noble plantation in Virginia', expresses his desire for the counsellors 'to know the present and future commodities of our countrie; or the qualities and conditions of the inhabitants, or what course is best to be taken with them' ([Knight of Elvas] 1611, A2). Hakluyt's evaluation of La Florida is very positive, highlighting the richness of the land in commodities such as cotton, gold, silver, stones of great value, among others (*ibid.*). On the contrary, the translator's assessment of Floridian people is ambivalent and ranges from an appreciation of the eloquence of the caciques to the inferiority of these inhabitants when compared to the Europeans. Thus, if the Knight of Elvas' descriptions of the encounters between the natives and de Soto seem mostly formulaic within the narrative, Hakluyt, in his translator's dedication to the English version, does not question even for a moment these representations. Instead, he has words of admiration for the eloquent speeches made by the caciques. In a short statement dedicated to explaining 'the manners and dispositions of the inhabitants', the translator states:

among other things, I finde them noted to be very eloquent and well spoken, as the short orations, interpreted by John Ortiz, which lived twelve yeeres among them, make sufficient prooffe. And the author, which was a gentleman of Elvas in Portugall, employed in all the action, whose name is not set downe, speaking of the Cacique of Tulla, saith, that aswell this Cacique, as the others, and all those which came to the Governour on their behalfe, delivered their message or speech in so good order, that no Oratour could utter the same more eloquently. (A4)

While praising the Native caciques' eloquence, the English translator does not consider how problematic and unreal these discourses are. Not only do the words of the caciques penned by the Portuguese conqueror negate agency to the Native leaders, but they also fail to reveal important aspects of the encounters, past and present, between Floridians and Europeans. The case of Hirrihigua, detailed only by Garcilaso, is an excellent example of how the natives kept their memories of Pánfilo de Narváez alive for more than a decade; in Hirrihigua's case, the memory of Narváez's violence was inscribed on the cacique's own body. Neither the Knight of Elvas nor his translator mention that aspect of the story, focusing instead on the cacique's violence.

In fact, immediately after praising the intellectual capacity of the natives for making eloquent speeches, Hakluyt criticizes their behavior:

But for all their faire and cunning speeches, they are not overmuch to be trusted: for they be the greatest traitors of the world, as their manifold most craftie contrived and bloody treasons, here set down at large, doe evidently prove. They be also as unconstant as the wethercock, and most readie to take all occasions of advantages to doe mischief. They are great liars and dissemblers; for which faults often times they had their deserved painments. And many times they gave good testimonie of their great valour and resolution. (*Ibid.*)

Such generalizations of the natives contrast with Hakluyt's translation theory, previously expressed in 1601. He affirms that 'a good translator ought to be well acquainted with the proprietie of the tongue out of which, and of that into which he translateth, and thirdly with the subject or matter it selfe' (Galvão 1601, vi). Although Hakluyt had a mastery of other European languages, among them Portuguese, neither he or the Knight of Elvas understood any indigenous languages, deeming

it impossible for them to confirm the accuracy of the interactions the latter had observed between Europeans and Natives. On the other hand, Garcilaso is able to underline some interpretative mistakes caused by language barriers, even though neither he nor Silvestre had any knowledge of Floridian native languages. However, as a philologist with a strong linguistic awareness, and well versed in the linguistic mistakes that Spaniards made in Peru, Garcilaso is able to reflect on these issues.²³ As Voigt states, ‘Linguistic misunderstanding is perhaps the most common example of confusion cited by Garcilaso, whose task is to clarify what a monolingual or monocultural observer could be incapable of comprehending’ (2009, 115). As a result, the Portuguese author and his translator’s description of completely foreign cultures resulted in the dismissal of their history and their political structures. Thus, Hakluyt’s descriptions of New World people contributed, through his preface, to cementing the image of the savage in the European imagination.

5. Conclusion

Although the scribe (Garcilaso) and the translator (Hakluyt) took different approaches regarding the presentation of de Soto’s voyage, both intellectuals took unofficial accounts and instilled them with authority for the benefit of their respective empires. Garcilaso, stating his reasons for adhering to true facts while composing his history, declares that his purpose in writing *La Florida* is ‘inciting and persuading Spaniards by my history to acquire the land of Florida for the augmentation of Our Holy Catholic faith’ (1951, xliii). His statement is timely, since Spain’s power to control that region was in decline.²⁴ Likewise, Hakluyt, who published his first collection of travel writings in 1582, at a time when England did not occupy any territory in the New World, continued his efforts to advance England’s imperial expansion with the translation of *A relação verdadeira*.²⁵ In his dedication, after describing the savage nature of the Floridian people, he proposes

To handle them gently, while gently courses may be found to serve, it will be without comparison the best: but if gentle polishing will not serve, then we shall not want hammerours and rough masons enow, I meane our old soldiers trained up in the Netherlands, to square and prepare them to our Preachers hands. ([Knight of Elvas] 1611, A4)

This approach to colonization is intended to be a critique of Spanish treatment of natives in the New World at a time when translations of Spanish accounts and ‘The descriptions of the Spanish conquest in the New World profoundly shaped the representation of the Habsburg tyranny in Protestant Europe, where the American Indians were often idealized as “noble savages” and presented as potential allies in the fight against Spain’ (Pirillo 2013, 34).

In the process of writing history, the Portuguese soldier’s authority relies on his condition as an eyewitness and his status as a *fidalgos*; similarly, the credibility of Hakluyt, the English

²³ In the ‘Preface to the reader’ of his *Royal Commentaries*, Garcilaso states his discontent with the way learned Spaniards had written the history of the New World, and states that his ‘purpose is not to gainsay [those authors], but to furnish a commentary and gloss, and to interpret many Indian expressions which they, as strangers to that tongue, have rendered inappropriately’ (de la Vega 1989, 4).

²⁴ For a study of Spanish efforts to defend their territories in La Florida, not only militarily but also religiously, see Turner Bushnell 2006.

²⁵ As early as 1582, when he published *Divers voyages*, his first collection of travel writings, the translator expresses his frustration that England had fallen far behind its continental rivals. In his dedication to Philip Sidney, Hakluyt states, ‘I Maruaile not a little ... that since the first discouerie of America ... after so great conquests and plantings of the Spaniardes and Portingales there, ... wee of Englande could neuer haue the grace to set fast footing in such fertill and temperate places, as are left as yet vnpossessed of them’ (¶1).

translator, rests on his reputation as a lettered man. For both European authors, those facts were enough to be deemed trustworthy. Instead, Garcilaso finds himself penning the history of a territory that Spain considered peripheral from an ambiguous position. Not only must he prove the credibility of his eyewitness *hidalgo* soldier, but he also must deal with his *mestizo* identity to legitimize his work. Frank Salomon and Stuart Schwartz noted the challenge of categorizing and defining individuals of mixed races, such as the *mestizo*, a category that was opposed to *castizo* in colonial times (2008, 477); moreover, Spaniards regarded *mestizos* as ‘anomalous and harmful’ (478). This suspicion toward mestizos made them fall out of the documentary records, transforming them into a ‘disappearing category,’ as Joanne Rappaport argues. With this, Rappaport implies ‘that under particular circumstances, people classified as mestizos dropped out of the mestizo slot and into other categories’ (2014, 10). Garcilaso navigates his mestizo identity in a particular manner. As an intellectual settled in the Peninsula, some of the prejudices previously mentioned, such as the anomaly and the harmfulness attributed to *mestizos* did not affect him because he inserted himself into Spanish society as a man of arms and letters. Instead, he subverts these negative constructions of identity and uses his dual indigenous and Spaniard heritage to authorize his writing. Thus, by the end of his preface, the Inca pleads that his history be received as authentic, requesting that ‘I be pardoned its errors because I am an Indian. For since we Indians are a people who are ignorant and uninstructed in the arts and science, it seems ungenerous to judge our deeds and utterances strictly in accordance with the precepts of those subjects which we have not learned’ (de la Vega 1951, xiv). This appearance of false modesty constitutes a criticism of how imperial powers deemed indigenous people’s intellect as inferior. Thus, using his assumed illegitimacy in the eyes of his Spanish readers, Garcilaso legitimizes his history built on oral and written testimonies from common soldiers.

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