

"VUELA POR ALTA MAR, ISLEÑO ESQUIFE":
ANTONIO DE VIANA'S
CONQUISTA DE TENERIFE (1604)

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*A mis queridos primos canarios,
los Herrera Padilla*

A late Renaissance epic of 14,372 lines collected into sixteen hefty cantos, *La conquista de Tenerife* is one of the first literary works to emerge from the Canary Islands, the volcanic archipelago regarded by antiquity as the edge of the known world.¹ The title of the present essay—taken from Lope de Vega's laudatory sonnet "Al bachiller Antonio de Viana" (58)—shows that the poem, first published in Sevilla in 1604, has both insular and peninsular affiliations. The opening stanza of Lope's sonnet aims to launch Viana's epic onto the high seas of epic poetry:

Por más que el viento entre las ondas graves
montes levanta y con las velas rife,
vuela por alta mar, isleño esquiife,
a competencia de las grandes naves (58).²

Tapping into the modesty topos in his address to the reader ("Al discreto y piadoso lector"), Viana himself speaks of "la navecilla de mi humilde ingenio" (54). Viana's little boat of an epic is competing, on the rough seas of epic poetry, with some giant "galleys"—Ariosto, Tasso, Ercilla, and perhaps even Lope himself, given that Viana fulsomely alludes to *La Dragontea* (1598) as a "Dragón de oro" (54). The influence here is mutual, however, in that Viana would inspire Lope, in turn, to compose a *comedia* called *Los guanches de Tenerife* (Alonso 17). This essay will approach Viana's epic in three stages, beginning with a brief account of my introduction to this author, whose curious recoil from various sordid historical facts may be tied to the strange circumstances of his authorship. After this, I shall discuss Viana's aboriginophilia—his literary idealization of the native peoples of Tenerife. In conclusion, I will focus on the cantos that deal with the coming of the Spaniards to Tenerife (Cantos 3 and 4), and the "marriages"—both personal and national—that they contract with the conquered natives at the end of the epic.

Although this essay aims to contribute to a resurgence of ideological interest in the *guanches*—the pre-Hispanic aborigines virtually extinguished

by the Spaniards—my scholarly investment in Spain's conquest of the Canaries began more poetically, during a visit to a precipice in La Gomera. Hauntingly called "La Gollada de Peraza," the site memorializes a historical triangle of adultery that Viana refuses to chronicle. The end of the affair, which took place in 1488, was both violent and banal: while cheating on his wife with a *guanche* woman, Hernán Peraza, also known as the Count of La Gomera, was assassinated by rebellious natives. Viana's repressive passage on this adulterous episode effectively challenges the reader to disinter the "causes" behind the Count's slaying and, even, to consider the justice of it:

Gozando de aquel tiempo venturoso
 Pedro de Vera, en el gobierno ufano,
 sucedió, que por causas que en silencio
importa que se queden y sepulten,
 algunos bandos de gomeros nobles,
 gente atrevida, osada y resoluta
 y en puntos de honor poco sufrida,
 a su señor el conde dieron muerte:
 justa o injusta, la razón lo juzgue . . . (2.950-958; emphasis added)

The epic's most recent editor claims that the sexual antics behind Hernán Peraza's assassination are suppressed by Viana, "conforme a su púdico criterio contrarreformista" (Alonso 137, n. 55). The same pudicity, however, does not constrain Fray Juan de Abreu Galindo, a late sixteenth-century priest who chronicles the events with surprising relish: "Hernán Peraza trató amores con una gomera hermosa, que vivía en unas cuevas en el término de Guahedum, donde tenía sus tierras de sembrar." A group of her kinsmen (those "gomeros nobles" in Viana's passage) persuaded this woman—who was called Yballa or Iballa³—to send for her lover. The unsuspecting Hernán Peraza went to the cave and, upon hearing a noise, was told by his native mistress "que se vistiese presto, que los iban a prender sus parientes." These noble kinsmen indeed confronted the Count and killed him at the mouth of the cave. The natives would describe his death, in their own indigenous language and by a reference to their own clay pottery: "Ya el gánigo de Guahedun se quebró" (Abreu Galindo 2.28).

Viana's epic similarly occults the response of the Count's aggrieved widow, who ordered her cheating husband's body to be brought back for burial. Instead, the Countess's fears for her own safety dominate Viana's narration: "Al fin, con este escándalo y revuelta / se metió la Condesa en una torre, / tímida del furor de sus vasallos / y para asegurarse de peligro / en un bajel aviso a Vera envía" (2.959-963). Pedro de Vera—the conquistador of Gran Canaria who is also remembered as Cabeza de Vaca's grandfather—comes, like chivalry to the rescue, to the aid of the distressed Count-

ess. Sailing to La Gomera with six ships to mete out punishment to the guilty natives, he throws a funeral mass for the slain Hernán Peraza, arrests all the guanaches attending it, tracks down some other suspects in the hills, and condemns all the male natives over fifteen years of age to be executed (Abreu Galindo 2.28 and 29). The Count's widow, Beatriz de Bobadilla, emerges from her Tower with all her powers intact. Viana's meager character sketch about Beatriz de Bobadilla may be supplemented by the contemporary historian Fernández-Armesto, who considers her

one of the cruellest and most beautiful women in Castile. From an involvement with the King himself, she had gone on to the conquest of the Canaries in 1481 as the wife of the conquistador Hernán Peraza. When he was murdered by rebellious natives in 1488, she was to become mistress of the island in her own right, suppressing the rebellion bloodily and enslaving many of the islanders. She combined the qualities of *femina fortis* and *femme fatale*. (53)

As the new governor of La Gomera, Beatriz de Bobadilla⁴ became not only "mistress of the island" but also—if we are to trust "the notoriously prurient Michele de Cuneo" (Fernández-Armesto 53)—she may have become the mistress of Columbus, who revittled his ships on her island en route to the Indies.

All this scandalous erotic history is glossed over by Viana, whose preference is for pure love with respectable literary antecedents. The maidens in this epic all specialize in chaste encounters of a bookish kind. One of them, Guamarca, resembles a guanche Clorinda, a protofeminist who rejects the advances of Tinguaro with these testy lines: "¿Dite palabra yo para ser tuya? / ¿Es mi padre señor de mi albedrío?" (9.269-70). Even more conventional are the Petrarchan loves of "la bella infanta Dácil" (5.51), a freckled, fictional beauty, with the "real world" Capitán Castillo. When this Captain from Castile encounters love, he unleashes all the Petrarchan tropes—"ángel sois vos y fuego en que me inflamo" (5.260), and so forth. The many anguished negotiations with Petrarchan love in Viana's epic align it with Spenser's almost contemporary *Faerie Queene*, announced by the English poet as a combination of "fierce warrs and faithfull loves" (I.1). But the wars and loves in Viana's text are complicated by language barriers. In addition to the "icy fire" into which love plunges the Captain, he also encounters the Babel Tower of bilinguality. Lamenting that he cannot communicate with his guanche maiden in her language, that Castillian and guanche coexist but are as yet closed and deaf to each other, the Spanish captain ends up by cursing Babel: "Maldigo, ¡oh Babilonia! el devaneo / del soberbio edificio que hiciste / por donde al general hablar hebreo / en variedad de lengua repartiste" (5.270-274).

On the generic front, Viana's epic has been classified as almost-but-

not-quite an epic: "casi cumple con la estructura del género" (Alonso 29). This "casi" might suggest some anti-epic dimensions. These are virtually buried, however, by the avalanche of classical epic codes found in *La conquista de Tenerife*: signs of certainty, assertions of timelessness, expressions of truth, prophetic discourse, epic line-up of warriors, pre-packaged heroes—everything, in short, that Bakhtin would regard as naive in comparison to the novel, whose generic task is the overcoming of such "naivete" (*naivnost*). Certainly Viana's epic has little of the skeptical, conjectural, experimental qualities that were emerging—even as he was writing—in the rival genre of the novel (*Don Quixote* would be published one year after *La conquista de Tenerife*). One must ask whether Viana's epic still expresses adequately the lived experiences of the culture producing it, or whether it qualifies as a residual discourse. This epic, in short, still awaits critics who will submit it to the big Bakhtinian questions. Does Viana, for example, provide a form sustained "on the basis of a unitary national myth that perceives itself as a totality"? Does he unwaveringly portray "a peak time" in Spain's heroic national past? Does he rely on an "impersonal and sacrosanct tradition, on a commonly held evaluation and point of view"? Does his epic possess an "ossified generic skeleton," one that is hardened and no longer flexible? (Bakhtin 64, 13, 16, 3, 10). The answers to many of these questions will depend on some knowledge of the circumstances, both personal and historical, behind the writing of this strange Atlantic epic.

To approach *La conquista de Tenerife* with some biographical knowledge about its author will shed light on various episodes in the text—perhaps most especially the passages about bodily diseases. Born in La Laguna in 1578 to Francisco Hernández de la Medina and María de Viana, the poet used only his mother's surname, signing his work as "el Bachiller Antonio de Viana."⁵ Given that Viana's father was a tailor, Cervantes's claim for poetic genius in tailors—"tan capaz es el alma del sastre para ser poeta, como la de un maese de campo" (*Persiles* 133)—seems to have skipped a generation here. Viana himself would become a doctor, a "licenciado y médico cirujano," in 1605, a year after publishing *La conquista de Tenerife*. He wrote his epic, in short, while he was still a medical student in Sevilla. After an early attempt to practice medicine in Tenerife, Viana moved back to Sevilla, where he became Surgeon General for the King's galleys (*médico de las galeras reales*). In this post he traveled widely through Italy before dropping out of sight between 1611 and 1631. Apart from his epic—and not unlike his English contemporary Sir Thomas Browne—Viana authored one or two medical treatises: *Espejo de Cirujía* in 1631, essentially a treatise on tumors, and another medical *Discurso* in 1637 (which manuscript is now in The Hispanic Society). The last we hear of Viana, in 1649 he is back in Sevilla, where he distinguishes himself by a cauterizing technique during the city's Bubonic Plague. There are many gaps and mysteries in this poet's biography, but not as many as in those of his patron, Don Juan Guerra de

Ayala (1563-1615), the man who made possible Viana's epic and who is extolled as "el primer mecenas . . . de la literatura canaria" (Cioranescu 19).

Antonio de Viana was commissioned to sing the martial exploits of the Guerra family, a poetic project which called for great invention, given that the family tree that needed to be memorialized was not particularly distinguished. Among other "defectos" in this lineage, the patron's grandmother was of converso stock and his mother was the illegitimate daughter of the second Conde de La Gomera. Don Juan Guerra, in short, needed a poet who could provide him a certificate of nobility, especially since he was applying for the position of Captain of Honduras, a post he was granted in 1605—one year after publication of the epic that exalted his antepasados: specifically, the conquistador Lope Fernández and his two "nephews." These ancestors must have complicated the poet's job considerably: "De los dos sobrinos que anexiona a la persona de Lope Fernández, uno es sobrino pero no es conquistador, mientras que el otro es conquistador pero no es sobrino." The attitude of Viana's 1986 editor apropos of these family fictions levels the whole issue of blood lineage: "¿Qué más da que Lope Fernández haya sido maestro de campo, como afirma Viana, o herrero, como hacen otros?" (Cioranescu 16-17).

Although the glorious exploits of the Guerra warriors turn out to be a tissue of lies, they luckily surface only intermittently in the poem, for example, in Viana's "Dedicatoria" to don Juan Guerra, which plays with the family surname—"Volved su guerra en paz, Guerra pacífico" (52)—and in his section on "la descendencia de los Guerras" in Canto 15. Thanks to the vanity and ambitions of don Juan Guerra, in short, we are left with not a bad little epic. Editor Cioranescu uses at least two doses of litotes to evaluate it: "sin ser el mejor poema, es el más fértil y el más generosamente enriquecedor; su poesía no es la que más exalta, pero conmueve la sensibilidad canaria y la conciencia de lo que se debería llamar la canariedad" (10). Viana's most recent editor, María Rosa Alonso, would seem to concur with this judgment: "no se trata de una obra de altos vuelos" (26).⁶ If Viana's epic moves "the Canarian sensibility," it does so largely through a gross idealization. Although he was commissioned to reproduce and reinforce the values and ideology of Spain's imperial policies—to write a shamelessly triumphalist work that would celebrate his patron's ancestor as one of the great conquistadores of the Canaries—Viana produced instead a wildly idealized portrait of the guanches. Although far more prettified than Ercilla's *La Araucana*, Viana's poem could also be labeled an "epic of the losers" (Quint).

The anxiety of influence behind this epic also bears mention and invites further research. Viana was directly influenced by the historical treatise *Historia de Nuestra Señora de Candelaria*, published in 1594 by Fray Alonso de Espinosa (1543-1602?), a Dominican priest said to owe his "entusiasmo indigenista" to that earlier Dominican, Bartolomé de las Casas.⁷ Despite

all the geographical and botanical lore Padre Espinosa provided, he is only grudgingly acknowledged in Viana's address "Al discreto y piadoso lector" (53). Although considerable portions of Viana's epic are basically a reproductive imitation, in verse, of what he read in Padre Espinosa's treatise—in one canto he even cites him as a witness (Canto 16.749-54 and 784)—Viana appears remarkably ungrateful toward his source, whose work he rudely dismisses in his address to the reader as "un tratado, digno de que se detrate" (53).

The inaugural lines of Canto Primero handily serve as a précis of Viana's epic:

Canto el origen del canario nombre
y el renombre de bien afortunadas
de las siete estimadas islas bellas;
publico de ellas y de sus varones
grandezas, invenciones y costumbres,
amores, pesadumbres y discordias;
de guerras, las concordias y altos hechos;
de los hispanos pechos, las victorias,
con fama, honor y glorias conquistadas. (I.1-9)

The "muchos dares y tomares" (2.737) of those conquests—what Viana himself sums up as "mil combates y victorias, / con muy notable daño de canarios" (2.782-83)—require little glossing. Setting aside the sizzling battle of "la Matanza" in Canto 8, all the "peligrosos asaltos y batallas" (2.659) seem less gripping to modern readers than Viana's representation of the enemy culture.

After an entry-level lesson on the islands themselves—variously called "Afortunadas" (1.49), "venturosas" (1.46), or "los Campos Eliséos" (1.101)⁸—Viana reviews various theories about the ancient name of "Canarias" and about the murky origins of the islands' pre-Hispanic inhabitants. At a strategic point, Viana rehearses the grim legend that dissident peoples from Roman Africa—"ciertos pueblos rebeldes"—were forcibly put out to sea as exiles, the empire having first punished them: "cortándoles un poco de las lenguas / y los índices dedos y pulgares" (1.185-86). The amputated tongue was supposed to account for "el silbo," the whistling language that can still be heard today. An article fulsomely titled "Leyenda erudita sobre la población de Canarias con africanos de lenguas cortadas," mentions Berbers who were exiled because they had blasphemed against the Roman gods (Alvarez Delgado). Apart from their "cuerpo giganteo" (1.372), Viana oddly claims that the guanches "fueron muy parecidos a españoles" (1.379). Some of the religious similarities would seem to be a projection: we are scarcely persuaded, for instance, that the guanches abhorred the Seven Deadly Sins.⁹ And some of the repressive sexual customs Viana describes

for the guanches have a familiar peninsular ring, for example, that divorce was ruled out among them (1.745); that the punishment for adultery was being buried alive (1.817-18); and that a fallen woman (“la doncella atrevida y descompuesta”) could be released from jail only if her sexual partner agreed to marry her (1.813-14).

Other guanche customs, however, must have seemed decidedly “foreign” to the Spaniards, the mummification rites most especially: embalming followed by a fifteen-day exposure to the sun until the mummified dead body (known as a “xaxo”) “quedaba muy mirlado, enjuto y seco” (1.840-59). Viana also describes the political system of the guanches, focusing his epic on Bencomo, the most powerful of the nine Tenerife Menceys, who was reigning during the conquest, when internecine squabbles made the island especially vulnerable. Finally, Viana’s epic exposes the reader to a great number of “canarismos” (*banot, sunta, tea, til, gánigo, tagoro, tamarco, tamaraona*) and—the most enduring signifier—*gofio*, the staple food of the guanches: as Viana puts it, “el menudo y sutil polvo / a quien llamaron *gofio*” (56).¹⁰

Viana’s avowed “musa mía” (3.2) enters the epic in Canto 3, almost as an afterthought: she is *La Candelaria*, purported to have appeared in the Canaries one hundred years before the Conquest and the christianization of the guanches. After a rapid survey of medieval politics involving European interests in the Canaries—we learn, for instance, that Enrique III of Castille (1379-1406) had once donated the islands to a Frenchman (2.12-23)—Viana goes on to highlight some famous Spanish warriors who made forays into the Canaries across the fifteenth century, often selling the “isleños naturales” to the Moors as slaves (2.79-80). Among the tediously long epic inventories of peninsular warriors catalogued in this epic, a few are well known to history. Pedro de Vera, for example, mentioned above for his salvific foray into La Gomera, is labeled a slavetrader in this epic (2.969-71). Alonso Hernández Lugo, on the other hand, an equally militant slavetrader named “Gobernador de la Conquista” in 1493 (2.991-93), is not. The slavetrading practices of this last conquistador—roundly condemned by Padre Espinosa—are curiously silenced by Viana.¹¹

But the most creative addenda in Viana’s epic occur, as I have suggested above, in his representation of the Canarian aborigines. The Mencey Bencomo and his court, for example, all live like kings, enjoying the pleasures of court life, dances, concerts, games, gourmet food, and amorous dalliances. Although one editor compares them to Italian princes—“viven como unos príncipes Italianos” (Cioranescu 30)—I would draw attention to the Moorish palaces repeatedly invoked as the traditional housing for the Mencey. When the “infanta” Dácil comes on scene, the narrator often speaks of her father’s palace—“del alcázar del rey su padre” (5.51)—counting on the reader to forget that the guanches all lived in caves. Although Viana may have been reading the popular *Abencerraje* or even the *Guerras*

civiles de Granada while writing his epic, this borrowed idealization—from Moorish to guanche culture—may have an additional, non-literary, source: like the *moros*, the guanches seem to heighten imperial anxieties, to molest the collective conscience of their peninsular conquerors.¹² For this and multiple other reasons, the arrival of these conquerors (“La venida de los españoles”) in cantos 3 and 4 should be of special interest to contemporary colonial studies.

Critical warnings abound concerning the dangers of homogenizing the imperialist projects of different European nations. In the preface to her comparative history of different ceremonies of possession in the New World, for example, Patricia Seed reminds us that “French, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, and English ceremonies and symbolic means for initiating colonial authority are frequently lumped together, as if there were a single common European political picture of colonial rule.” Insisting that these different nations did not share “a common understanding of even the political objectives of military action,” she allows, however, that all conquering Europeans shared the following “technological and ecological platform”: “trans-Atlantic ships bearing crossbows, cannon, arquebuses, horses, siege warfare, and disease” (3). Minus a full Atlantic crossing, this entire platform is operative in Viana’s epic. Anthony Pagden’s recent book, *Lords of All the World*,¹³ would add to this platform yet another entity shared by European conquerors: a common source in Roman imperial imagery, a reliance on the discursive practices of the great theoreticians of empire, from Cicero and Virgil to Tacitus and Sallust (17). To this end, Viana’s epic is not without its Roman shards, including a Virgilian comparison of “el rey Fernando” to Aeneas in his struggle “contra Juno y Turno” (7.534).

The device of prophecy, as characteristic for the epic as prediction is for the novel (Bakhtin 31), prepares the guanches for the arrival of the Spaniards. A lyrical seer—an “agorero mágico, / llamado Guañañemeñe”—addresses the following prophecy to his doomed kingdom:

Por el cerúleo mar vendrán nadando
 pájaros negros de muy blancas alas,
 truenos, rayos, relámpagos echando,
 señales propias de tormenta y malas;
 dellos saldrán a tierra peleando,
 fuertes varones con diversas galas
 de otra nación extraña y belicosa,
 para quitarle el reyno poderosa. (3.266-273)

For his pains, the prophet is sentenced to an ignoble death and, before long, the whole tribe sees “el agorero de un laurel colgado” (3.333). Soon after this hanging, a guanche warrior called “Capitán Sigoñe,” who has witnessed the arrival of the Spanish galleys along the coast of Tenerife,

reports the event in a public forum, repeating the precise imagery of the dead prophet:

de aquellos montes hacia el mar mirando
grandes bultos vi en él que parecían
pájaros negros por el agua andando;
con alas blancas todos se movían

hacia la tierra juntos se acercando. (. . .)

Vi que llegaron cerca de la orilla
y aquellas alas blancas encogieron,
temor me dio y, por ver tal maravilla,
de suerte me escondí, que no me vieron;
luego en la mar, que pareció hundilla,
rayos, truenos, relámpagos vertieron
los pájaros de sí, como en invierno
el cielo arroja, hasta el hondo infierno. (4.593-597; 600-607; italics added)

The big “pájaros negros” then produce from their bodies “otros pájaros pequeños,” which violently paddle themselves up to the beach where they disgorge their “dueños,” men explicitly signified here as the “other”: “hombres, personas son a lo que siento, / mas no son hombres, no, como nosotros, / que el talle tienen de hombres, pero de otros” (4.613-615).

Viana then focuses on the main accoutrements of the Spanish conquerors—the cross, the sword, and the horse—all foreign entities for the guanaches, who are represented throughout as struggling to access the Spanish nomenclature of power. When the Spaniards plant a crucifix in the sand and kneel to worship it, the guanache spy describes it as “dos palos son no más, pero cruzados, / Y no sin causa de ellos respetados” (4.622-23). Viana’s description of the Spanish horse, which has no name in the guanache language, is equally arresting:

Tienen un ave, o animal hermoso,
manso, gallardo, guerrador, dispuesto,
de cuatro pies, y pisa tan brioso
que corre, o vuela, que es ligero y presto:
sube sobre él el dueño belicoso,
y espanta sólo verle encima puesto,
que a su gusto le rige fácilmente,
y acá o allá le lleva diligente. (4.664-71).

While one of the Spaniards is napping near the beach, the guanache spy steals his sword. When the Spaniard awakens, the spy overhears him screaming about his loss:

oí que: espada, espada, repetía
y así el oscuro nombre decorando,

vine a entender que debe de llamarse
 espada, y que es muy digna de estimarse.
 Vestida viene; veísla aquí desnuda;
 sólo la tome el rey, que así conviene,
 mirad qué filos tiene, y aunque es muda
 hechura propia de una lengua tiene . . . (4.652-659)

The king or mencey Bencomo then proceeds to enact something that every reader of Columbus's *Diario* (the entry for 11 October, which includes the events of 12 October) will immediately recognize:

Sólo Bencomo no se sobresalta,
 llega a la luz de un encendido hacho,
 mira el fulgente acero de la espada,
 pasa los dedos con cuidado y tiento
 por sus agudos filos y apretándolos,
 córtase sin sentir, queda confuso
 de ver la roja sangre que derrama . . . (4.753-59)¹³

Writing on his "Primer Viage" over a century earlier, Columbus had found the mountains of Juana (Cuba) "sin comparación de la ysla de Teneryfe." He had also compared the Guanahani to the Canarians in color—"ni negros / ni blancos" (Jane ed., 5 and 47). Viana continues the tradition of these transatlantic comparisons by imitating Columbus's description of American natives cutting their hands on European steel. In a later sequel that again reverses these violent colonial encounters, Cristóbal de Ponte will try to construct the "Caribbean machine" known as the plantation in the Canaries (Benítez-Rojo 9). After Viana's rendition of the coming of the Spaniards to Tenerife, his epic goes on to include grim portraits of both siege warfare and disease. Viana's representation of the conquest of Tenerife—essentially a dress rehearsal for Spain's later conquests of Mexico and Peru—merits a larger role in present-day colonial studies. At the epic's end the Spaniards get what they wanted all along from the guanches of Tenerife: their guarantees of peace, their religious conversion, and their obedience to Spain. The rest is history—colonial history.

The Canarian Imaginary—the idea of selfhood among Canarians—would seem to remain ambivalent: "El canario no puede negar ninguna de sus dos herencias" (Cionarescu 33). "Canariedad," in sum, is the fruit of a stormy marriage of two cultures, the kind of marriage that would be famously repeated in the New World. Viana's epic both literalizes and celebrates this bi-cultural marriage. Like protagonists from a Greek novel, the guanche heroine Dácil and her Spanish Capitán Castillo survive war, sickness, poverty, prison, and even a death-sentence before being reunited again in the closing Canto 16. Dácil is then baptized and, soon after, wed to her peninsular conqueror: "felice fin de su amorosa pena, / y principio dichoso

de linajes" (16.552-53).

The guanche side of that lineage remains alive and well in the Canaries. Many of the islands' inhabitants are still christened with guanche names like "Dácil," "Rosalba," and "Beneharo" (Alonso 38). The daughter of one of my cousins is called "Gara," the guanche version of Shakespeare's Juliet. Everybody still eats gofio, including gofio ice-cream, and many of the younger inhabitants of La Gomera are now going to school to learn to whistle "el silbo." The indigenous whistle is loudly present in prose fiction: "Canario canta, Mencey silba" opens the splendidly lyrical "Canción de las siete islas" (1986) by Eugenio Suárez Galbán, a vivid Canarian writer and editor who teaches on both sides of the Atlantic. On the more philological front, the recent and elegant study by Luis Fernández Pérez et al.—*Relación de palabras de la lengua indígena de La Gomera* (1995)—is part of this same rehabilitation of the pre-Hispanic world. Even the two recent editions (1986 and 1991) of Antonio de Viana's guanche-idealizing epic testify that, after five hundred years of solitude, the empire is writing back.

Notes

¹The first edition of Viana's epic was actually titled "*Antigüedades de las Islas Afortunadas de la Gran Canaria, conquista de Tenerife y aparecimiento de la Santa Imagen de Candelaria en verso suelto y octava rima, por el Bachiller Antonio de Viana, natural de la isla de Tenerife*. Dirigido al capitán Don Juan Guerra y Ayala, señor del mayorazgo del Valle de Guerra. En Sevilla, por Bartolomé Gomes. Año de 1604." I have used Alonso's heavily annotated 8th edition (1991), similarly titled *Antigüedades de las Islas Afortunadas*, to which I am indebted for much historical data. All citations in my essay are from Alonso's edition and are parenthetically documented, by page numbers for the prefatory materials, and by canto and line numbers for Viana's text. But I have used the title, as well as consulted the "Introducción," of the 7th edition of Viana's epic, Cioranescu's *Conquista de Tenerife* (1986), which lacks notes and line numbers. I wish to thank Elizabeth Davis for helping me track down some bibliographical data on Viana. I am especially grateful to Nicolás Wey Gómez for the transatlantic expertise he brought to a reading of this essay.

²Lope also speaks of Viana's youth in this sonnet, making a prophecy that never materialized: "Si en tiernos años, atrevido al Polo, / miras del sol los rayos orientales, / en otra edad serás su Atlante solo."

³See also Alvarez Delgado on "El episodio de Iballa."

⁴Beatriz de Bobadilla is often confused with Beatriz Fernández de Bobadilla, the marchioness of Moya, who was her cousin, the keeper of Queen Isabel's wardrobe, and the sister of Francisco de Bobadilla, the royal official who arrested the Columbus brothers during their third voyage, sending them

home in chains.

⁵Viana's own marriage (c. 1598) to Francisca de Vera, possibly a native of Lima, produced a son, Antonio, born in 1607.

⁶Alonso also cites Menéndez Pelayo's harsh evaluation of Viana's epic (30).

⁷Cioranescu notes three influences behind Viana's epic: Las Casas, Espinosa, and, finally, the "escuela poética Sevillana" (Juan de Arguijo, Lope de Vega, et al.), whom Viana may have known and was possibly in contact with while composing the poem (29-30).

⁸Tenerife was formerly called "Nivaria" (42), because of the "nieve" atop the Teide (50), and La Gomera was called "Casperia" (42).

⁹As Alonso ironically puts it, "es singular el amor de Viana por los aborígenes. Lo que les enseñaban a los guanches adolescentes sus mayores era el aborrecimiento a los siete pecados capitales que enumera como la Iglesia Católica" (85, n. 41).

¹⁰*Banot* and *sunta* (weapons of the guanches); trees such as the *barbuzano* (*Apollonia canariensis*), the *tea* (pino canario), the *til* (*Oreodaphne foetens*), and the *viñátigo* (*Persea indica*); plants such as the *bicácaro* (*Limonium spectabile*) and the *mocán* (*Visnes mocanera*); the earthenware they call *gánigo*; their place of reunion or *tagoro*; the *tamarco* or Guanche leather dress; and, finally, foodstuffs such as *tamaraona* (a meat fritter), and *gofio* or what the Spanish call *harina de cebada tostada*. These terms, along with some barbarisms and latinisms, are usefully printed together in a "Vocabulario" section of Cioranescu's edition (415-18).

¹¹Viana himself is on record as having bought and sold slaves. He purchased a black male slave in Tenerife, whom he sold in Las Palmas in 1607. He also purchased a black female slave called Dominga, whom he sold in Tenerife in 1608 (Alonso 18-19). Father Espinosa's slavetrading charges against Alonso Hernández Lugo appear in Bk. 3, ch. 6, p. 103 of his treatise.

¹²Just as "los negros, para la España del siglo XVII, son una presencia incómoda en la conciencia colectiva" (30), as Fra Baltasar Molinero rightly argues in a powerful essay on "Sancho Panza y la esclavización de los negros."

¹³Columbus's entry, written in broken Spanish, reads as follows: "porq les / amostre espadas y las tomavan por el filo: y se cortava con ignoracia / no tiene algun / . . . fierro" (*Diario* 66, ll. 43-46).

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