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## Inés del alma mía (Inés of My Soul) or How to Retrain the Chronicle

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## Inés del alma mía (Inés of My Soul) or How to Retrain the Chronicle

### Abstract

Among the multitude of lettered discourses employed to communicate Latin America's marvels during the conquest, the chronicle constituted a particularly effective option. That is, its necessary framing for a Spanish or Portuguese courtly audience with heterogeneous contents mixing history and fiction allowed for a text that served to validate personal service to the crown. Part and parcel of these chronicles' objectives, of course, consisted of portraying an indigenous population supposedly anxious to accept the work load of the encomienda as well as the Catholic conversions that accompanied this legislated slavery. Moreover, this Eurocentric perspective also boasted an almost completely masculine one. Indeed, with the unique exception of the Baroque "monster" of Catalina de Erauso, colonial texts exploring Latin America staunchly supported an epic, masculine point of view. When considered at all, indigenous men and women alike lacked any voice altogether; even doña Marina, the literal "tongue" of Hernán Cortés, required Bernal Díaz del Castillo's *Historia verdadera de la conquista de Nueva España* to achieve a lettered presence, albeit in the words of a European male writer in the end. The very first pages of Isabel Allende's novel *Inés del alma mía (Inés of My Soul)* address this discursive void in a thoroughly deliberate manner. Introduced as "Crónicas de doña Inés Suárez," Allende's book ventures into a territory challenging hegemonic representations of subjugated indigenous populations of Latin America as well as European women involved in the conquest. While the "Crónica de las Indias" frequently reveals a distinctly hybrid character, the simultaneous multiplication of indigenous and Spanish subjects in *Inés del alma mía* promises a narrative that offers an innovative agency of the former in the context of the Latin American conquest.

### Keywords

chronicle, Isabel Allende, Inés del alma mía, Inés Suárez

*Inés del alma mía (Inés of My Soul) or How to Retrain the Chronicle*

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Among the multitude of lettered discourses employed to communicate Latin America's marvels during the conquest, the chronicle constituted a particularly effective option. That is, its necessary framing for a Spanish or Portuguese courtly audience with heterogeneous contents mixing history and fiction allowed for a text that served to validate personal service to the crown. Part and parcel of these chronicles' objectives, of course, consisted of portraying an indigenous population supposedly anxious to accept the workload of the encomienda as well as the Catholic conversions that accompanied this legislated slavery. Moreover, this Eurocentric perspective was almost completely masculine. Indeed, with the exception of the Baroque "monster" of Catalina de Erauso, colonial texts exploring Latin America staunchly supported an epic, masculine point of view.<sup>1</sup> When considered at all, indigenous men and women alike lacked any voice altogether; even doña Marina, the literal "tongue" of Hernán Cortés, required Bernal Díaz del Castillo's *Historia verdadera de la conquista de Nueva España (True History of the Conquest of New Spain)* to achieve a lettered presence, albeit in the words of a European male writer.<sup>2</sup>

The very first pages of Isabel Allende's novel *Inés del alma mía (Inés of My Soul)* address this discursive void in a thoroughly deliberate manner. Introduced as "Crónicas de doña Inés Suárez" 'Chronicles of Miss Inés Suárez,' Allende's book ventures into a territory challenging hegemonic representations of subjugated indigenous populations of Latin America as well as European women involved in the conquest.<sup>3</sup> Although her status as a best-selling, internationally known writer certainly presents Allende with a position of privilege from which to fill this almost complete textual omission, her trials as an exile underscore a

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<sup>1</sup> Among others, Christopher Columbus, Hernán Cortés, and Pedro de Valdivia constitute canonical voices that underlined this ostensibly heroic, first-person perspective.

<sup>2</sup> As explored by Renato Martínez, doña Marina achieves a discursive "Otherness" that Suárez fails to reach; the latter remains "un perfil indeciso" 'an indecisive profile' in her relative lack of lettered inclusion (28). Nevertheless, Suárez's decision in the novel to join the conquest bestows her with certain agency initially missing from other characters in Allende's historical novels, such as the slave Zarité in *La isla bajo el mar* ('Island Beneath the Sea').

<sup>3</sup> From the perspective of Latin America's historical novel, moreover, Allende also injects a formidable dose of her own fictional ingenuity as a means of questioning what Antonia Viu calls Seymour Menton's "limitations" while the latter defines this historical genre (128-30). Furthermore, Magdalena Perkowska argues the postmodern iteration of Latin America's "la novela histórica nueva" 'historical novel' attacks the linguistic possibility of accurately describing these colonial encounters at all (17-19).

shared sense of not quite belonging. Physical, cultural, and linguistic estrangements all shaped Allende's life as well as writings to the point that she could only successfully put letter to experience when separated from Chile: "Exile is better for a writer, I think. Not for his life, but for his work- it's best for your work if you must confront a situation you don't understand and make sense of it through your work" (Rodden 437). Indeed, the marginalization introduced by Allende's exile hints at a fundamentally human empathy that permits a measure of aesthetic possibility when engaging with these neglected colonial voices. Boasting its fundamentally hybrid genre, the chronicle of the Indies served as Allende's discursive means in *Inés del alma mía* of investing agency in the post-conquest Mapuche population while simultaneously blending Spanish epic figures with subaltern traces.

### Erasure in Writing

The initial encounters between indigenous peoples and Spanish explorers in the Caribbean and Central America presented an immediate dilemma in regard to the latter's description of Latin American native civilizations. To the peninsular reading audience, these unseen cultures and lands demanded intelligible signifiers to translate unknown signifieds. Scientifically speaking, humanists such as Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo pointedly endeavored to communicate Latin America's flora and fauna in a manner that his Spanish public could comprehend (Beckjord 47-52); "sea cows" allowed for a European visualization of the fantastic appearance of a manatee, for example. The indigenous population received a similar discursive treatment. While some texts grudgingly granted a measure of humanity to these civilizations, inferiority invariably colors their assessments: "Alongside these juridical expressions of the doctrine of inequality, we find a great many more in the letters, reports, and chronicles of the period; all tend to present the Indians as imperfectly human" (Todorov 150). Of course, metaphors dominated these early descriptions, and yet, their actual language invariably suggests European culture as the model demanding emulation.

On the other end of the continent, and thus reached relatively late by European explorers, Chile's Mapuche population only reinforces the chronicle's descriptive difficulty in human terms. Soldier-poet Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga's epic poem *La Araucana* (*The Araucaniad*) (1590) stands as a lonely, early discursive attempt to express certain indigenous humanity and courage through the Mapuche decades-long wars waged against the Spanish invaders; pastoral flourishes and artificial European additions to indigenous language only reinforce Ercilla's awkward efforts to suit a Latin American civilization to European cultural

preconceptions (Zamora 335-6).<sup>4</sup> Moreover, epic qualities bestowed on Mapuche warriors such as Caupolicán fail to manifest themselves within the female indigenous population: “No siento el ser vencidos tanto cuanto/ver pasar las espadas crudamente/por vírgenes, mujeres, servidores,/que penetran los cielos sus clamores” (Ercilla y Zúñiga 220) ‘I don’t feel being vanquished so much as/seeing the crude passing of swords/through virgins, women, servants/whose clamors penetrate the sky.’<sup>5</sup> In soundly phallic terms, Mapuche women bear the brunt of corporeal victimization without the hope of agency on their own part (Pastor 223-24). Naming the most innocent of the Mapuche first, Ercilla’s poetic voice invites European empathy by way of patent female objectification. In the end, only their death cries demonstrate any form of active subjectivity, and exclusively by “penetrating” the heavens. This discursive tendency to explore Latin America’s environment, indigenous civilizations and women based on peculiarly European notions of language and power only compounds itself when considering the Mapuche origins.

Upon contemplating her indigenous adversaries in *Inés del alma mía*, Allende’s protagonist Inés Suárez speculates first and foremost based on the appearance of Chile’s Mapuche: “¿De dónde vinieron estos Mapuche? Dicen que se parecen a ciertos pueblos de Asia . . . Son salvajes, no saben de arte ni escritura, no construyen ciudades ni templos, no tienen castos, clases ni sacerdotes, sólo capitanes para la guerra, sus toquis” (Allende 144) ‘Where did those Mapuche come from? It is said they resemble certain peoples in Asia . . . they are savages; they know nothing of art or writing; they do not build cities or temples; and they have no castes, classes, or priests, only captains for war, their *toquis*.’ (Sayers Peden 120). These initial superficial impressions seemingly reinforce those typically relayed in sixteenth-century chronicles. Apparently lacking in religion and literacy, Suárez regards the Mapuche population in decidedly dehumanized terms when first arriving in Chile. In addition, her willingness to entertain a physical connection between this indigenous group and possible far-East relatives not only underscores a reliance on skin-deep observations but also hints at a Western discursive inclination when exploring the East. As explained by Edward Said, Western narratives ultimately manifest power over Asia and the Middle East by eliding their unique cultural and historical features in favor of a portrayal that returns to “occidental” concerns; the drive to establish and subsequently maintain dominion over the East factors heavily into its discursive elaborations (1-16). Thus, texts serve as a convenient means of

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<sup>4</sup> In addition, Ricardo Monsalve affirms this engagement with Ercilla’s readers’ preconceptions about the indigenous “Satan worshippers” as akin to Spain’s Muslim fixation. Both populations are similarly marginalized primarily due to their rejection of the Catholic faith (Monsalve 121-4).

<sup>5</sup> My translation.

freezing Eastern images in a subservient position invariably viewed as a supposedly pale, inferior, and mute reflection of their Western rivals.

Nevertheless, this imperial predisposition to speak for the exotic “Other” (and simultaneously negate the latter’s subjectivity) also reveals itself in a specifically indigenous context after the conquest. Besides the affirmation of titles and properties garnered in wars against indigenous populations, Rolena Adorno argues that chronicles also dealt with theoretical questions such as the humanity of the conquered, albeit simply as a means of steering future laws promulgated in Spain (211). On paper, then, Ángel Rama’s “lettered city” depended on a juxtaposition of pronouns: “us” (literate European males and eventually creoles) against “them” (especially those unable to wield a pen). With this discursive power to ascribe whole populations to the literal margins of cities and laws, phallogocentric chronicles proved especially apt at fixing collective indigenous identity in dangerously essentialist terms. Meant to remain static, these discursive elaborations of indigenous groups cling to a unified, one-dimensional character that systematically denies both multiplicity and flux: “In many ways the colonial condition entails precisely this: denying the conquered their identity as subjects, breaking the bonds that used to confer that identity, and imposing others that disrupt and disjoin- with intense severity” (Cornejo Polar 7). Lacking all cultural links or the ability to evolve, these indigenous roles follow European discursive impositions exclusively.

Furthermore, the colonial power dynamic consigning native populations to isolated discursive niches changes little when lawmakers or church officials are replaced by the intelligentsia. Indigenous voices still remain silent in service of the written word. Power in the form of an institution issues from Latin America’s universities rather than the court. Thus, in the final analysis, even the exalted indigenous subject of the *testimonio* signals a mediated identity unable to completely escape lettered agency: “The banality of leftist intellectuals’ lists of self-knowing, politically uncanny subaltern stands revealed; representing them, the intellectuals represent themselves as transparent” (Spivak 275). Ultimately, the marginalized individual or group in question remains of secondary interest; hegemonic intentions, often European or North American, come to the fore.

Still, the Latin American *testimonio* and its voices seriously undermine intellectuals’ efforts to define them. The best-laid plans to faithfully transcribe indigenous ideas into text encounter resistance in terms of evading notions imposed by academic language from outside the marginalized community: “Both subalternity and the thought of subalternity appear to reside on the limits of representation . . . within this thinkability the subaltern announces an aberrant disequilibrium of signification that destabilizes the illusory seamlessness of hegemonic thought, politics, and culture” (Williams 100-1). Thus, rejecting Western intelligentsia’s projections of their identities, as well as the inadequacies

of the very language utilized to assign them, Latin America's indigenous populations like Chile's Mapuche face a prickly dilemma: Is non-indigenous representation even possible? In the case of Suárez's chronicle composed for her adoptive daughter from the trail of her lover Pedro de Valdivia's conquest of Chile, this famously hybrid, non-linear discourse functions as an ideal vehicle to examine an increasingly multiple, unstable subject for Mapuche and Spaniard alike. Specifically, Pedro de Valdivia, Felipe/Lautaro, and Suárez herself demonstrate complex identities that respond readily to the chronicle's unique discursive features.

### **An Epic Hero?**

The profoundly historical character of Pedro de Valdivia would seem to offer the most traditional figure of epic subjectivity for this text. After all, his appearance in poetry (*La Araucana*), and maps (the origin of a current metropolis), among other discourses, evidences an epic role occupied by his name up to the present day.<sup>6</sup> The title of Allende's novel itself even plays with this powerful masculine authority by citing Valdivia, not Suárez, who states the defining line while bidding farewell to the love of his life. Conversely, this sentimental note itself begins to suggest that the latter's chronicle will problematize and hybridize the identity of even the most epic of Spanish heroes. This genre demands Valdivia's attention initially as a young man still living in Spain:

Su mayor deleite eran los libros, en especial las crónicas de viajes y los mapas, que estudiaba al detalle. Había aprendido de memoria el poema del Cid Campeador, se había deleitado con las crónicas fantásticas de Solino y los viajes imaginarios de John Mandeville, pero la lectura que realmente prefería eran las noticias del Nuevo Mundo que se publicaban en España. (Allende 48-49)

His greatest pleasure was books, especially chronicles of journeys, and maps, which he scrutinized in detail. He had memorized the poem of the Cid, and he had drawn pleasure from the fantasy chronicles of Solino and the imaginary voyages of John Mandeville, but his true passion lay in the stories published in Spain about the New World. (Sayers Peden 34)

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<sup>6</sup> Despite Valdivia's seemingly epic presence in *La Araucana*, however, Inogen Sutton highlights this conquistador's corrupt role in a Spanish empire rife with excessive territorial ambitions (427-31).

Epic poetry certainly occupies a key niche in the reading list of this future conquistador, and yet, Valdivia's embrace of the chronicle illuminates a particularly Latin American angle to his heroic designs. The overwhelming sense of "wonder" that Steven Greenblatt associates with sixteenth-century chronicles helps to motivate Valdivia's journey to Latin America as well (19-25).

On the other hand, Valdivia himself fails to realize that the discourses issuing from Latin America paint a picture of indigenous civilizations devoid of multiple faces. Even the maps that Pedro scours hour after hour seek to name and delimit a vast unknown territory that evades its textual inscription on two separate levels. Due to political intrigue between ambitious conquistadores and various members of the aforementioned "lettered city," Perú's map transformed itself constantly as a means of excluding those travelers outside Spain's circles of courtly power. For the Mapuche civilization, epic poetry misnamed it based wholly on haphazard considerations of Chile's map: "Mapu-ché, 'gente de la tierra', así se llaman ellos mismos, aunque ahora los denominan araucanos, nombre más sonoro, dado por el poeta Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga, que no sé de dónde lo sacó, tal vez de Arauco, un lugar del sur" (Allende 82-83). 'Mapu-ché, 'People of the earth,' they call themselves, although now they are called Araucanos, a more sonorous name given them by the poet Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga, who took it from who knows where- perhaps from Arauco, an area farther to the south' (Sayers Peden 64).

Once again, Valdivia and his troops begin their relationship with the Mapuche utilizing a European, instead of an indigenous, naming of their soon-to-be enemies. As "people of the land," therefore, the Mapuche tribe not only find their territory imperiled by Valdivia's arrival, but the very name with which they identify themselves as well. Whether referring to Chile's map or its indigenous population in his chronicle, Valdivia blissfully ignores their multiple discursive manifestations in order to present a singular "reality" easily digested by his Spanish audience. Indeed, Valdivia's status as epic warrior and chronicler benefits greatly from creating and sustaining a homogeneous characterization of Chile's Mapuche people as violent enemies in contrast with the Christian civilization subsequently promised to them.

As a means of flourishing economically and politically, Latin American colonial society relied on a long list of polar opposites between indigenous communities and Spanish conquistadores.<sup>7</sup> Justifying initial massacres and future oppression to maintain power, colonial discourse simply could not afford any gray area or half measures when describing indigenous inhabitants: "The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is, let us dare to admit, the enemy of values, and in this

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<sup>7</sup> Mary Louise Pratt refers to this discourse as "anti-conquest" in the sense that male writers affirmed their lack of responsibility for colonial atrocities while simultaneously attacking the "Other's" humanity (7).



sense he is the absolute evil” (Fanon 41).<sup>8</sup> Denying even the possibility of acceptable social conduct, this colonial perspective of indigenous (in)humanity yearns for an indisputable foil. This discourse invited their invading armies to fill this perceived moral void with positive (Catholic) attributes or eliminate the resistant elements of the population in the process.

Among basic taboos of Western culture that motivated polemical battles during the conquest was the practice of anthropophagy, and Suárez’s chronicle of Valdivia’s experiences in Perú and Chile certainly explores this debate directly. However, Frantz Fanon’s criticism of the aforementioned European tendency to promote a single, unproblematic indigenous identity undermining virtue altogether encounters stiff opposition from indigenous voices that contest Spain’s original chronicles. That is, Catalina, a faithful indigenous servant of Suárez, provides added details systematically elided from the first written reports arriving from Chile:

Un cronista, que hizo las campañas del sur en 1555, escribió que los indios acudían a comprar cuartos de hombre como quien compra cuartos de llama. El hambre... quien no la ha sufrido no tiene derecho a pasar juicio . . . Catalina, sin embargo, me aseguró que los *viracochas* no son diferentes de cualquier otro mortal, algunos desenterraban a los muertos para asar los muslos y subían a cazar indios en el valle con el mismo fin. Cuando se lo dije a Pedro me hizo callar, temblando de indignación, pues le parecía imposible que un cristiano cometiera semejante infamia. (Allende 252)

One chronicler, who in 1555 fought in the campaigns in the south, wrote that the Indians bought quartered humans, just as they would llama meat. Hunger... anyone who has not suffered it has no right to pass judgment . . . Catalina, however, assured me that we *viracochas* are no different from any other mortal; some dug up the dead to roast the thighs, and went out to hunt the valley Indians for the same purpose. When I told Pedro, he cut me off short, trembling with indignation, for it did not seem possible to him that any Christian would do something so despicable. (Sayers Peden 216)

Ironically enough, the once comfortable polar opposites argued by a Spanish chronicle suddenly inspire visible discomfort for Valdivia. Unwilling to admit similar survival instincts among fellow Spaniards, Valdivia silences the chronicler

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<sup>8</sup> Dominican friar Antonio Montesinos, however, undermined this moral judgment by questioning Spanish treatment of indigenous populations in his 1511 sermon. Indeed, his critique of the Spaniards’ absent moral compass regarding abuses of indigenous labor constituted a challenge to the *encomienda* (the system of rewarding soldiers’ service to the crown with land and indigenous labor) as an institution itself (Castro 56-7).

herself. Yet, the oral source provided by Catalina regarding the desperate European practice of consuming the dead represents that of an empathetic witness to these cannibalistic events; she creates a direct comparison between Spaniards and Mapuche based on their shared humanity. Thus, despite the previous observations volunteered by an early chronicle as to cannibalism in the Andes, Suárez ultimately demonstrates common ground when she refers to a lack of sustenance as the factor binding indigenous with Spanish communities. For Valdivia, however, this growing discursive possibility of equating Mapuche with Spanish morality reaches even more disturbing dimensions in the event of a documented loss of Catholic values altogether.

While Suárez's lover initially negates Spanish examples of anthropophagy, repeated cases of grotesque violence enacted upon Chile's Mapuche population begin to suggest decidedly conflictive identities for both. In the context of the famous Valladolid Debate of 1550-1551, which pitted Fray Bartolomé de las Casas and his "Black Legend" resulting from Spanish atrocities against Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda and his argument supporting "natural slavery" in Latin America, this ever deepening ambiguity surrounding Mapuche and European humanity is particularly understandable.<sup>9</sup> From Valdivia's perspective, which developed largely based on chronicles and epic tales elaborating on Latin America, this sudden discursive questioning of Catholic morality (and consequent interrogating of Mapuche identity) demands a particularly forceful response. Still, Valdivia's quieting of Catalina's second-hand account of European cannibalism proves only momentarily effective as chronicles proliferate around Latin America. For example, after the expansion of Valdivia's campaign to the coast by other conquistadors, the lettered record left behind seriously undermines any European claim to the moral high ground:

Un cronista que viajaba con Pastene contó que en una rada remota los marineros fueron recibidos con comida y regalos por amables indígenas, a quienes retribuyeron violando a las mujeres, asesinando a muchos hombres y capturando a otros. Después condujeron a los prisioneros encadenados a Concepción, donde los exhibieron como animales de feria. Valdivia consideró que este incidente, como tantos en que la soldadesca quedaba mal parada, no merecía tinta y papel. No se lo mencionó al rey. (Allende 330-31)

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<sup>9</sup> As Daniel Castro affirms, Dominicans such as las Casas and Montesinos represented a minority voice supporting the Laws of Burgos (1512) theoretically designed to control the inhuman indigenous labor conditions imposed by Spanish *encomenderos* 'landowners.' While ultimately not practically enforced outside of print, the Laws of Burgos succeeded in opening a critique of Spaniards' enslavement of Latin American indigenous communities (Castro 55-62).

In Pastene's pilgrimage, he sailed to idyllic places he described with Italian eloquence, omitting the abuses others reported. In one remote inlet, his sailors were welcomed with food and gifts by friendly Indians, whom the Spaniards rewarded by raping the women, killing many of the men, and capturing others they took in chains to Concepción, where they exhibited them like animals in a fair. Valdivia believed that this incident, like so many in which his soldiers behaved badly, did not merit paper and ink. He did not mention it to the king. (Sayers Peden 285)

The initial offerings of food to these Spanish soldiers create a strong juxtaposition to the previously formulaic, deceptively singular characterization of Mapuche identity as anthropophagic, and therefore, "savage." Moreover, the treatment of indigenous peoples as subhuman emphasizes Fanon's criticism of the colonizers' intentional dehumanization of subjugated populations (43). Valdivia's decision to separate this episode out of his report, simultaneously expunging it from the royal written record, seems to momentarily preserve Spanish "epic heroes" from an opposition to a supposedly moral identity. In the end, Suárez's chronicle fulfills what Valdivia's discourse categorically refuses: recording an incident that scrutinizes Mapuche "barbarity" as well as Spanish "civility." These increasingly opaque and multiple identities of these two poles of the colonial experience only problematize themselves further in the Spanish integration and subsequent treason of the Mapuche warrior Felipe/Lautaro.

### Trading Places

Upon returning from converting Mapuche communities outside of the fortress of Santiago, the chaplain González de Marmolejo displays a seemingly orphaned youngster who would receive the name of Felipe from Valdivia. This gesture exerts hegemonic discursive power onto this apparently nameless child along with Valdivia's formidable epic subjectivity; the indigenous "Other" will hitherto respond to the utterly Spanish kingly name conferred to him. Furthermore, Felipe arrives refusing to speak. In a very literal manner, then, Felipe's silence confirms Gayatri Spivak's idea that lettered actors ultimately present discourse for marginalized populations. Yet, Felipe's conscious manipulation of this European objectification and future wresting of corporeal agency combine to highlight a vivid example of a proliferation of Mapuche identities.

Moving readily between Santiago and the constantly roving bands of his Mapuche comrades, Felipe's access to careless Spaniards' conversations, when added to his close observations of their tactics, leads to a thorough understanding of the invaders' strengths and weaknesses. This underestimation of Felipe and his

propensity to absorb Spanish military tendencies originates in the initial chronicles detailing Mapuche existence in general. These texts notably failed to recognize important Mapuche cultural transformations undergone during the conquest as well as an overall willingness to embrace multiple “roles” to probe Spanish deficiencies (Madden 105-09). For Felipe, one of these identities that he assumes is overtly linguistic in nature: he eventually accepts the post of language tutor for Suárez.

Nevertheless, his bilingual characterization as well as careful association of strategic concerns with temporary, superficial didactic posing signal an individual whose cultural fluency should raise immediate Spanish alarms: “Le pedí al lengua que le propusiera un trato: si él me enseñaba su idioma, yo le enseñaría castellano. A Felipe no le interesó para nada. Entonces Pedro mejoró la oferta: si me enseñaba mapudungu tendría permiso para cuidar los caballos. De inmediato se iluminó la cara del mocoso” (Allende 212) ‘I asked the tongue to propose a deal: if he taught me his language, I would teach him Spanish. Felipe was not in the least interested. Then Pedro sweetened the offer: if he would teach me Mapudungu, he would have Pedro’s permission to look after the horses. The boy’s face immediately lit up’ (Sayers Peden 181). In this case, linguistic and military considerations go hand in hand. Horses represented a chief advantage held by the Spaniards over Felipe/Lautaro’s future armies, and so, Valdivia’s oblivious offering of time to learn equestrian maneuvers suits the former perfectly. Already functional in the Spanish language, further linguistic study proves excessive for Felipe’s aims, but still, the additional time spent conforming to this seemingly ignorant Mapuche stereotype in Santiago allows this warrior the insider’s knowledge of Spanish culture, worldview, and most importantly, military tendencies. In reality, Suárez’s chronicle aptly recognizes that which previous versions failed to accomplish when describing Mapuche culture: her reference to Felipe as the “lengua” illustrates his two (linguistic) faces. Felipe’s success as spy and warrior hinges on his transformations and duplicity. This willingness to change and embrace a hybrid indigenous identity even extends to Lautaro’s definitive triumph over Valdivia in utterly corporeal terms.

Literally feeding into the Spaniards’ association of anthropophagy with the Mapuche, Lautaro and his troops finish their ambush of Valdivia’s forces by consuming their fallen foes. On the other hand, as Suárez mentions, this sudden end directly opposes the poetic version offered by Ercilla and instead relies upon an eyewitness account provided by indigenous princess Cecilia’s attendant: “Dicen que los mapuche devoraron su cuerpo en un rito improvisado, que hicieron flautas con sus huesos y que su cráneo sirve hasta hoy como recipiente para el muday de los toquis” (Allende 361) ‘They say that the Mapuche devoured his body in an improvised ritual, that they made flutes from his bones, and that his skull is used to this day as a vessel for the *muday* of the *toquis*’ (Sayers Peden

313). Lacking in the serene pastoral indigenous perspective offered in *La Araucana*, Suárez's description of her ex-lover's bloody fate also suggests a performative aspect of this cannibalistic scene. That is, the sheer exhibitionistic value of Valdivia's death, consumption, and ongoing utilization of his skull for future Mapuche political purpose signals an indigenous effort that transcends the actual feast and base material considerations. Indeed, Robert Madden sustains that the Mapuche practice of anthropophagy and the use of Spaniards' remains as instruments mostly served as a tool of intimidation; not a widespread tradition before the conquest, eating the vanquished responded to the conquerors' fear of this possibility in defeat (119-20).

Suárez's inclusion of the adjective "improvisado" only reinforces this idea that the Mapuche wore multiple masks suiting diverse situational exigencies, with cannibalism not occupying an established place in their cultural repertoire previously. Nevertheless, the epic subjectivity that Lautaro literally ingests upon vanquishing Valdivia marks a tacit acknowledgement of the doubling undergone by Mapuche identity after the Spaniards' arrival in Chile. Anthropophagy may be a show, a spectacle with deliberate motivations going far beyond mere subsistence, and yet, on a corporeal level, Mapuche and Spaniard alike mix into a hybrid whole. Suárez herself steadily embraces this multiple subjectivity revealed by the military campaign, with the literary artifact of the chronicle standing as a testimony to a life stubbornly unwilling to narrate itself tidily.<sup>10</sup>

### Never-ending Story

While Valdivia can coyly comment that women "carecen del sentido de la Historia" (Allende 223) 'lack a sense of history' (Sayers Peden 191) supposedly due to their prioritization of the demands of everyday survival, Suárez simply chooses another discourse to satisfy her rapidly transforming identity in South America. Indeed, the reference to Juana "la Loca" at the beginning of her chronicle volunteers a figure in Spanish history whose apparent insanity originates more in the rightful queen's loss of a power struggle rather than any glaring lapses in Juana's actual comportment. After her confinement to the monastery of Tordesillas, then, phallogentric history merely finishes the demolition of Juana's reputation with the "facts" of her fall detailed to fit the Queen's imprisonment. Thus, Suárez insists on a chronicle based upon a personal, intimate connection with the conquest of Chile, one elided in poem and history alike:

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<sup>10</sup> According to Olga Ries, this physical voyage of Suárez itself contributes to her character's "postnational" development as well as enlarges Allende's global reading audience (7-8).

Me asombra el poder de esos versos de Alonso, que inventan la Historia, desafían y vencen al olvido. Las palabras sin rima, como las mías, no tienen la autoridad de la poesía, pero de todos modos debo relatar mi versión de lo acontecido para dejar memoria de los trabajos que las mujeres hemos pasado en Chile y que suelen escapar a los cronistas, por diestros que sean. (Allende 84)

I am amazed by the power of Alonso's verses, which invent history and defy and conquer oblivion. Words that do not rhyme, like mine, do not have the authority of poetry, but in any case I am obliged to relate my version of the events in order to leave an account of the labors we women have contributed in Chile; they tend to be overlooked by the chroniclers, however informed they may be. (Sayers Peden 66)

With her adoptive daughter Isabel acting as her interlocutor, Suárez articulates a race against two powerful factors: death and forgetting. Curiously enough, she conflates *La Araucana* with history writing, confusing Ercilla's epic work and Mapuche nonfiction; Suárez's chronicle, therefore, will promise the sort of hybrid discourse combining intimacy and supposed objectivity. She must narrate these roles in the conquest, moreover, before old age claims Suárez; her unique contributions as soldier, lover, and chronicler will presumably fade into obsolescence unless inscribed graphically. However, Suárez's actual warrior-themed feats threaten to blur her own identity by attributing decidedly barbaric characteristics to the narrator as well.

A measure of Suárez's decision to employ the chronicle as a vehicle to communicate this story is the genre's popularity in narrating the European conquest from an eyewitness, personal perspective. Epic poetry, from all appearances, resists her project in its format, while its utterly masculine, violent subject matter seems to steer clear of the narrator's stated purpose of elevating the invisible daily tasks executed by women to support the conquest's long-term objective of creating a flourishing base in Latin America. Conversely, Suárez's effort to defend Santiago from Mapuche invasion hints at "savage," oral, and epic attributes that serve to question her identity as well.

With Valdivia and his troops searching for war, land, and plunder far from Santiago, a Mapuche army discovers the city almost completely vulnerable to a crippling attack. In the midst of rapidly deteriorating conditions in Santiago's siege, then, Suárez finds herself obliged to act in a decidedly masculine and "uncivilized" manner: "Y entonces enarbolé la pesada espada a dos manos y la descargué con la fuerza del odio sobre el cacique que tenía más cerca, cercenándole el cuello de un solo tajo. El impulso del golpe me lanzó de rodillas al suelo, donde un chorro de sangre me saltó a la cara, mientras la cabeza rodaba a

mis pies” (Allende 234-35). ‘I lifted the heavy sword in both hands and swung it with all the strength of my hatred toward the nearest cacique, beheading him. The force of the swing threw me to my knees, where gushing blood hit my face as a head rolled on the ground before me’ (Sayers Peden 201). In all, the seven beheaded prisoners reveal a gruesome will to survive on the narrator’s part, rejecting mercy altogether on the way. Moreover, Suárez acts in a truly epic fashion, wielding a formidable, phallic weapon in the process of surmounting seemingly impossible odds.

Yet, it is the European, Christian Suárez who also bathes in the blood of her victims, which certainly toys with their fellow Mapuche psychologically. She ultimately allows base emotions to overwhelm reason and humanity, leaving even Inés herself unable to turn away from the horrifying spectacle that she has created.<sup>11</sup> Playing her own epic role while simultaneously embracing a need to preserve at whatever cost the city and its people that she has helped construct and nurse, Suárez finally confronts a clearly savage visage. Like her Mapuche opposition, she utilizes the show of death and its corporeal remnants to intimidate, with terror standing as the final goal; the traumatic impact on Suárez, however, draws part of its power from her recognition that a hybrid colonial identity characterizes the European women involved with the conquest as well.<sup>12</sup> In sum, the chronicle-as-genre offers Suárez the ideal discursive vehicle with which to treat these unstable colonial subjects.

Appropriately enough, Suárez’s chronicle anticipates the narrator’s impending death while directing the manuscript to Isabel. The former strains to both remember the conquest and subsequently narrate her contributions to leave a discursive trace of profeminist agency in an era composed almost entirely of phallogocentric texts. This urgency manifests itself in a preoccupation with arriving at a satisfying conclusion: “No hay tiempo para detalles, hija, porque si nos demoramos esto puede quedar inconcluso y a nadie le gusta leer cientos de cuartillas y encontrarse con que la historia no tiene un final claro. ¿Cuál es el final de ésta? Mi muerte, supongo” (Allende 302) ‘I must not linger on details, daughter, because if we dally, this account may be left unfinished, and no one wants to read hundreds of quartos only to find that the story has no clear ending.

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<sup>11</sup> This image directly contrasts with the few Spanish chronicles that detail Suárez’s recuperative efforts made during this war with the Mapuche in 1541. According to Silvia Lorente-Murphy, in fact, these seven murders followed directly in the wake of Suárez’s equally heroic work with injured Spanish soldiers and civilians.

<sup>12</sup> Karr-Cornejo adds that Allende’s utilization of third-person narration in this episode, as well as Suárez’s sudden lapse when remembering its details, combine to demonstrate the latter’s inability to flawlessly comprehend her own history (6-7). Conversely, López argues that the tendency to both embrace and flee this apparent profile of the colonial “Other” constitutes a key characteristic of the conquest novels from the late twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries in Latin America (1-27).

What will the ending of this one be? My death, I suppose' (Sayers Peden 260). Still, Suárez errs on both counts. The chronicle does not, in fact, close with Suárez's dying moments, but rather focuses upon her abject reaction to the ghostly realization that Valdivia finally expired far from the confines of Santiago. Suárez outlasts her own text, rejecting the tidy end that she admittedly envisions for herself. In addition, the chosen genre of the chronicle also denies facile conclusions in favor of endings that resist culminating explanations typically offered in histories (White 16). The narrator's insistence, then, that readers will reject a book lacking this definitive resolution seems to contradict the very same discourse that Suárez embraces to convey her tale. Similar to the Spanish ghosts that plague her final moments, Suárez's chronicle succeeds precisely due to its inability to terminate on cue.

While Valdivia, Lautaro, and Suárez share multiple subjectivities as the latter's chronicle unfolds, the conflicting ends of Spaniard and Mapuche only underscore an increasingly mixed identity for both. From the narrator's perspective, for one, her caution regarding an unfinished text intersects nicely with the European phantoms that Suárez has lost during her stay in the Americas:

Juan de Málaga [el esposo español de Inés cuyo viaje a las Américas la inspire luego], Pedro de Valdivia, Catalina, Sebastián Romero, mi madre y mi abuela, enterradas en Plasencia, y muchos otros, adquieren contornos cada vez más firmes y oigo sus voces susurrando en los corredores de mi casa. Los siete caciques degollados deben estar bien instalados en el cielo o en infierno, porque nunca han venido a penarme. (Allende 242)

Juan de Málaga [Inés's Spanish husband whose voyage to the Americas inspires her thereafter], Pedro de Valdivia, Catalina, Sebastián Romero, my mother and my grandmother, buried in Plasencia, and many others. Their outlines become more solid every day, and I hear their voices whispering in the corridors of my house. The seven beheaded caciques must be well settled in heaven, or in hell, because they have never come to haunt me.' (Sayers Peden 208)

Traces of the dead who never disappear, in this case Spaniards, from Suárez's past suggest that both narrator and her chronicle will also reject a clear end, usually reserved for epics and histories. They all inhabit a liminal territory, with one face contemplating death and the other life. For these heroes and villains alike, they ultimately fail to encounter the eternal resting place promised by a Catholic death. Nevertheless, Suárez's Mapuche victims, supposedly savage, violent beings, triumph spiritually where their invaders fail. Although the former eventually lose their decades-long battle against Spain's armies, Suárez's



suspicion that these seven regional leaders have indeed reached divine destinations in death suggests that their hybrid identities negate superficial categorization as well as discursive representation.

### Chronicle of an Evasive Mapuche

When queried about her position as a Latin American woman novelist, Isabel Allende expresses an earnest sense of faith placed in her role as an advocate for marginalized populations: “I can be the voice of the many who are silent. I can convey the truth of this magnificent, tortured Latin American continent” (García Pinto 89). Nevertheless, the noble intentions of “representing” indigenous groups such as the Mapuche remain blind to the perils of speaking for “Other’s” experiences; even seemingly objective narrative is colored by the writer’s priorities first. In the case of *Inés del alma mía*, however, the narrator’s deliberate selection of a chronicle to trace the increasing hybridity of Spanish and Mapuche characters, respectively, ultimately highlights the futility of a linear, neatly-contained discourse regarding the conquest of Chile. After all, Trouillot’s insistence on the power of the chronicle’s excesses and lacks demonstrates perceptively the way in which this genre’s omissions foreshadow a blissful ignorance of its own conclusion: “Even as an ideal recorder, the chronicler necessarily produces meaning and, therefore, silences . . . The chronicler does not know the end of the story” (50). The disappearance of Suárez’s seven cacique victims indicates an indigenous evasion of Europe’s best textual efforts to define and homogenize them. Lacking an end, Suárez’s chronicle not only infinitely postpones her own death, but the comforting surrender of Mapuche agency as well. In the final analysis, this resistance to a one-sided, heroic conclusion resulting from a conflict between civilizations only emphasizes the notion that each side left a sizable influence on the identities of the other. Inés Suárez may eventually perish in peace, and yet not without Mapuche murmurs to haunt her thoughts.

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