Debauchery and Devotion:
Contrasting Images of Alcohol and Drunkenness in New Spain

James Córdova
HIST 770
Fall 2000
Introduction

Notions of drunkenness and its degenerative long-term affects on the mental, spiritual, and physical aspects of the human condition have a charged meaning when considered in the historical context of New Spain. There has long existed the stereotype of the alcohol-loving Indian—bereft of his dignity and autonomy—who finds solace in a debauched state of drunkenness. Charles Gibson (1964: 409), for example, concludes his final chapter of The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule by commenting on the depraved state of the Indians of Mexico: “If our sources may be believed, few peoples in the whole of history were more prone to drunkenness than the Indians of the Spanish colony”. Addicted to alcohol, this stereotypical Indian is seen in very general terms: he is not much different from any other Indian; he has not completely shed his heathen identity; and he is representative of the general state of Indians in the Americas. Such a generalized view of Native Americans is an inaccurate one because despite the commonality many of these groups share in their historical experiences with European colonizers and their descendants, the fabric of their identity is comprised of many diverse, and multi-faceted components.

Yet, there is some truth to this stereotype: the Native Americans of New Spain on many occasions drank in excess as alcohol was a central and important item in their daily and ritual lives. It cannot be determined, however, to what degree patterns of drinking and the quantity of alcohol consumed varied from pre-contact times.¹ What is known of drunkenness and the use of alcohol in New Spain comes to us through a number of sources. For the colonial period, ethnographic materials such as the writings of friars who lived among the natives and compiled texts that described various aspects of native culture, provide a great deal of information concerning alcohol and drunkenness. They include the works of Diego Durán, Motolinia, and

¹ See Taylor (1979) for a discussion on pre and post colonial patterns of drinking among native groups in New Spain.
Bernardino de Sahagún, among others. In addition, religious literature, such as confessional, written by the Church offer information about Spanish perceptions of native drinking patterns. Accounts of Mexico and its people from non-religious sources and pictographic imagery—made and commented on by native artists and scribes—also provide modern scholars with information directly pertaining to the use of alcohol and its native cultural significance. Finally, European-style paintings made in the eighteenth century called *casta* paintings—known for their depictions of the racially-mixed inhabitants of the Americas—provide visual expressions of European stereotypes of drinking and drunkenness.

To best understand colonial imagery of alcohol and drunkenness, one must consider for whom the imagery was intended as well as the background of the artists and their understanding of the subject matter. In pre-Columbian and early colonial native codices, such imagery is treated in a highly prescriptive and religious manner because their intended audience would have been comprised of native religious and political officials. In the *casta* paintings of the eighteenth century, images of drinking or drunkenness reflect Spanish conceptions and stereotypes of Indians and *castas*—the mixed races of the Americas. Though the tone of these works is not religious, *casta* painting artists developed a loose system of iconography that is as prescriptive as the imagery of the native codices. Because the nature of these images was largely limited by the expectations of the patrons for whom they were made, neither early native images or *casta* paintings provide accurate or unbiased pictures of alcohol and drinking in New Spain. The aspects of drinking and alcohol that are represented, however, speak of native and Spanish cultural perceptions of alcohol and drinking. In the early colonial period, natives chose to associate the drinking of alcoholic beverages with religion and ritual while Spaniards, throughout the colonial period, largely associated alcohol and drunkenness with the Other: an association that legitimized their presence and rule in New Spain. Native painters did not represent the negative
effects of alcohol in their codices unless their patron or intended audience was Spanish. Casta painting artists, regardless of their ethnic background, were commissioned by Spanish patrons and, not surprisingly, never painted a drunk Spanish man. There is only one known example of an intoxicated Spanish woman.

This study examines images of alcohol and drunkenness in the artwork of New Spain. The richest artistic genres from which these images are found belong to early colonial native manuscripts and eighteenth-century casta paintings. The chronological, cultural, and artistic differences that set them apart provide multiple points of view that are helpful in attempting to understand the nature and significance of alcohol and drinking in New Spain between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. In addition, certain literary primary sources and secondary sources by recent scholars of New Spain are utilized as they provide relevant information and context to the works of art examined.

Native imagery of alcohol, drinking, and drunkenness

New Spain was a land rich with people of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Before the arrival of the Spanish in 1519, and the subsequent period of conquest and colonization of Mexico, the different ethnic groups that inhabited the land were characterized by their languages, art, dress, customs, and other cultural factors. Among many of the ethnic groups that existed in central Mexico, the production and consumption of *pulque*--the most widely-known alcoholic beverage developed by pre-Columbian natives--was an important part of the ritual aspect of their cultures. Made from the juice of the heart of the maguey--a kind of agave plant native to central Mexico--pulque, or *octli*, as it was known among Nahuatl speakers, did not possess alcoholic properties until it was fermented for several days. Motolinia (1951: 331) provides a thorough description of the process of extracting and treating this substance to produce the popular intoxicant, pulque:

The sap when it is first collected is like hydromel. When cooked and boiled
it turns into a sweet wine. This wine is clear and the Spaniards drink it. They say it is very good and very nourishing and wholesome. The sap is fermented into a large earthen jar, as it done with wine, and they put into it certain roots, called by the Indians ocatli, which means ‘medicine or sauce of wine’. In this way they produce so strong a wine that it heavily intoxicates those who drink it freely.

Native codices from the sixteenth century provide pictures of the jars of pulque Motolinia mentions. They are represented in earthen vessels with an open lid and two handles on each side (fig. 1). Above the rim of the jar, a multitude of dots represent the frothiness of the beverage. This froth is a prescriptive characteristic of pulque iconography in Mexican codices painted in the native style.

Aside from its intoxicating effect, pulque had medicinal values that both natives and Spaniards acknowledged. Motolinia (1951: 331) writes: “if [pulque is] taken with moderation, it is wholesome and very nutritious. All medicines that must be served in liquid form are given to the sick with this wine”. Similarly, the sixteenth-century Franciscan friar, Diego Durán (1971: 306) writes: “This was used not only for feasts and orgies but also as a medicine. It is still in use today and truly has medicinal quality”. Treatment for many ailments given in Book 10 of Sahagún’s Florentine Codex include consuming or bathing in pulque. For example, the treatment for a sore throat included the consumption of pulque (Sahagún, 10: 149). In addition, pulque was said to help reactivate the process of lactation among women who ceased lactating (Sahagún, 10: 151). These are but a few example of the medicinal properties of this intoxicating beverage provided by Sahagún.

In addition to its medicinal value, pulque had significant religious importance among many native groups of central Mexico. Diego Durán (1971: 310) explains that “octli [pulque] was
adored as a god and was called *Ome tochtli*. He (Durán, 1971: 310) continues:

Besides being considered a god, it was the obligation to the divinities, especially
to that of fire. Sometimes it was offered [to the god of fire] in vessels at other
times sprinkled on the fire with a hyssop, at other times poured around the
hearth. It was the usual offering at weddings and wakes just as our own Spanish
people celebrate festive and funeral occasions with bread and wine.

James Lockhart (1992: 169) recognized the importance of pulque in other ritual ceremonies that
did not necessarily have religious significance. In examining grants and other transfers among
natives in the sixteenth century, he concludes that such negotiations were always ritualized with
the accompaniment of food and drink and that such negotiations had definite pre-Columbian
roots.

The vast majority of native images of pulque and pulque-related scenes express its
ritualistic and religious meaning. Sahagún (1978: 17), in book four of the Florentine Codex
describes the ritual set-up for Izquitecatl, whom he calls the god of the feast day Two Rabbit, or
*Ome Tochtli*, the calendrical date associated with pulque and intoxication. On this feast day, an
image of the patron deity, Izquitecatl, is set-up in the temple before which gifts and a basin full
of pulque are arranged. He (Sahagún, 1978, 4: 17) continues: “Into the wine dipped the drinking
tubes, extending from it so that those who sampled the wine stood drinking it”.

Such a basin filled with pulque and issuing drinking tubes is pictorially represented in the
sixteenth-century codex known as the *Codex Borgia*\(^1\) (fig. 2). Painted entirely in the native
style, this divinatory codex is a ritual document that was probably used for a number of purposes
including prognostications, calendrical calculations, and defining feast cycles (Díaz and Rodgers,

\(^1\) For a current discussion of the likely provenience of the Codex Borgia and alternative suggestions, see Díaz and Rodgers (1993: xiv).
1993: xvi). Although much of the content of the *Codex Borgia* has not been deciphered, it is recognized as a ritualistic document containing important religious information on pre-Columbian central Mexican beliefs and worldview.

The multiple occurrences of pulque vessels and associated deities in this codex denote the ritual importance of the drink. The bottom half of page 68 of this codex (fig. 2) represents the deity associated with the trecena sign *malinalli*, or "grass" (seen as the first day sign in the lower right side of the folio). In the center of the scene for the trecena malinalli is a vessel of pulque issuing six drinking tubes; probably the same kind Sahagún described in his text. To the left of the pulque vessel sits a man who is sipping from a stylized bowl or cup which presumably is filled with pulque. His headdress, facepaint, elaborate necklace, and throne on which he sits indicate his importance: he is probably a *tlatoani*.³ To the right of the pulque vessel, the goddess of the trecena, Mayahuel is represented in her prescriptive iconographical format. As the principal deity associated with pulque, Mayahuel is also the goddess of the maguey—the plant from which pulque is made. Wearing elaborate headdress and a crescent-shaped nose ornament—an iconographical feature of pulque gods—she stands in the center of a maguey. Above the pulque vessel, a circular symbol representing night and day probably signals mixed positive and negative prognostications.⁴

Another image of this important deity is found on Diaz and Rodgers’ Plate 12 (fig. 3) of the *Codex Borgia*. Here, Mayahuel is represented as the patron deity of the day-sign Rabbit (represented by a rabbit’s head to the left of the image of the goddess). She is seated in the center of a maguey which is depicted on a stylized throne, indicating her importance. She points to the day-sign thus associating herself with it. Above the image of Mayahuel, an elaborate

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³ In Nahuatl codices, a man seated on a stylized mat or throne indicates his status as *tlatoani* or leader.
⁴ Personal communication with Elizabeth H. Boone (February 2001).
vessel full of frothing pulque is drawn. Its association with Mayahuel indicates its ritual and religious importance. Images of pulque deities similar in appearance to Mayahuel appear in many early colonial native codices including the Codex Telleriano-Remensis (fig. 4), Codex Magliabechiano (fig. 5), and others. Though they are not always pictorially associated with the calendrical day-name Rabbit, they share similar iconographic features such as a crescent-shaped nose ring, bicolored facial paint (red in the center and dark at the sides with two additional yellowish ovals), a pendant of malinalli grass, and a curved axe with an inserted blade (Quiñones Keber, 1995: 177).

The association of rabbits and the day-name Rabbit with pulque and the pulque gods is documented in Sahagún’s Florentine Codex (1978, 4: 15). In Book Four, he writes that “wine”—the term he uses for pulque—was also referred to as the Four Hundred Rabbits. Patricia Anawalt (1997: 24) sees a logical association between rabbits and pulque since rabbits were known to live among maguey. In addition, instead of seeing a man in the moon, Anawalt (1997: 24) writes:

“the Aztecs saw a rabbit in there. Like the prolific rabbit, the lunar gods were connected with fertility, probably because the menses suggested a lunar cycle. In addition, the white, viscous pulque evoked milk and seminal fluid. Linked to the moon and the maguey plant, rabbits thus embodied a wide range of fertility symbolism”.

Whether Anawalt’s lunar associations with rabbits and the fertility significance of pulque are correct or not, the ancient Nahuas did associate rabbits with pulque and the pulque gods. In fact, those born on the day Two-Rabbit were thought to have been predisposed to drunkenness.

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5 See Gonçalves de Lima (1986) for a comprehensive compendium of images of pulque and pulque deities found in native Mexican codices. Unlike this study, Gonçalves de Lima’s work is not contextual, but purely a focus on imagery.

6 Also see Gonçalves de Lima (1986: 123) for pulque god characteristics in native codices.
(Sahagún, 1978, 4: 11). Sahagún dedicates an entire chapter to those who were born on this inauspicious day. Among other things, those born on Two-Rabbit were said to be disrespectful and impudent, debauched in appearance, inconsequential, intemperate in speech, adulterous, and prone to theft (Sahagún, 1978, 4: 11-13). In addition, ethnic associations were made with drunkenness. Sahagún writes that it was said of those who became drunk: “He is the image of a Huaxteca. Hast thou perchance finished the fifth wine [jar]? He drank the fifth wine [jar]” (Sahagún, 1982, 10: 194). The reference to the Huaxtecs as drunkards has it roots in the story of a Huaxtec leader who instead of drinking the prescriptive four jars of pulque, he drank five and consequently became very drunk and threw off his breech clout in public (Sahagún, 1982, 10: 193). As a result, he was besotted and in shame and henceforth the Huaxtecs were associated with drunkenness lewd behavior. A ceremonial scene from the Codex Borbonicus emphasizes the size of the artificial phalluses the Huaxtecs are holding in their hands: a likely reference to the story of their drunken leader and his indecency (fig. 6).

The licentious nature of drunkards is pictorially expressed in the sixteenth-century Aztec manuscript Codex Magliabechiano. In a sequence of pulque deities, the image of the pulque god Tlaltecayoa appears with the figure of a monkey-impersonator who holds a shield bearing the image of a closed fist with a projecting thumb between index and middle finger (fig. 7). This gesture, according to Elizabeth Boone (1983: 26), was a “European obscene gesture” that was “a particular widespread vulgarism in Spain” in the sixteenth century. The juxtaposition of this vulgar gesture with the monkey-impersonator alludes to pre-Columbian associations of the licentiousness of pulque gods and monkeys\(^7\) (Boone, 1983: 26).

Spaniards in New Spain seemed to have adopted native attitudes about the potential ill nature of alcohol when consumed in excess. There is an abundance of disapproving commentary

\(^7\) For a discussion on the iconographical meanings of monkeys in pre-Columbian art, see Peterson (1993: 104).
written by Spanish religious authors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in New Spain about the intoxicating effects of pulque and how many Indians seemed to have a weakness for it. Motolinia (1951: 331) writes of the ill effects pulque had on those who drank it: “In this pagan state the Indians made use of this wine in order to become violently drunk and accordingly more cruel and bestial”. In the same disapproving tone as Motolinia, Diego Durán (1971: 306), writes: “Today young and old go along with the norm which it seems that the devil has set up, so that once they begin to indulge they would rather lose their lives than pulque”.

In his book entitled Confessionario Mayor, y Menor en Lengua Mexicana (1634), the mestizo author and priest Don Bartolomé de Alva makes many references to pulque and drunkenness. As a confessionary, this book was meant to serve as a guide for priests administering the sacrament of penance to the natives of New Spain. Alva takes a decidedly unapproving stance against the consumption of pulque and suggests that the natives could not drink in moderation. Excessive drinking, he (Alva, 1999: 92) writes, caused them to lose their mental capacities and consequently, their resistance to sin. He writes: “Truthfully, I say to you, that it is nothing other than drunkenness and intoxication that has turned you into beasts, that has gone on taking away from you the use of reason and the natural light of knowledge that sovereign God gave you”. In another section, Alva (1999: 120) directly states one’s susceptibility to sin when intoxicated with pulque: “not only is it [your soul] handed over to the Seven Deadly Sins but to infinitely more (without count or number) very grave and enormous ones into which the infernal drink of pulque makes you fall, etc”. The blame put on alcohol rather than the one who commits the sin is echoed in Sahagún’s (1983, 4: 13) narration of society’s reaction to those born on the day Two-Rabbit: “Hence it was said: ‘Verily thus was his day sign. What is to be done?’”

The negative effects pulque had on those who indulged in it often were not unrecognized
by natives. Sahagún's discussion of the negative qualities of those born on the day Two-Rabbit, for example, provides insight into native condemnation of drunkenness. In addition, descriptions of bad nobles, women, and children, written in Sahagún's Florentine Codex, often refer to the abuse of pulque. For example, bad nobles, lewd youths, and prostitutes are all associated with drunkenness. Sahagún (1961: 20) in book 10 of the Florentine Codex writes: "The bad one of noble lineage [is] a scandalizer, a flatterer--a drinker, besotted drunk". In another passage he writes that the lewd youth "goes about drinking crude wine--drunkard, foolish, dejected; a drunk, a sot" (Sahagún, 1961, 10: 37). Among other things, he is shameless, brazen, impudent, wicked, debauched, filthy, a pleasure-seeker, and a keeper of mistresses (Sahagún, 1961, 10: 37). The prostitute likewise shares similar traits with the bad nobleman and the lewd youth. She is "the woman who sells herself, who repeatedly sells herself, [is] a harlot, destitute, besotted, drunk, gaudy, vain, filthy; a perverted woman" (Sahagún, 1961, 10: 37). It is noteworthy that in the accompanying illustrations to Sahagún's above descriptions, each person is depicted holding a vessel of alcohol. In the illustration of the bad noble (fig. 8), a man is seated outside on a mat and holds a bowl of pulque to his lips. It is certain that the drink is pulque because of the numerous dots speckled just above the rim of the vessel drawn next to the man. In the illustration of the lewd youth (fig. 9), a well-dressed man wearing a hat holds on to the hand of a woman facing him. He points to a chalice held up by another man who is also carrying a vessel presumably filled with alcohol. Here, the youth is visually associated with women--and by extension, seduction--as well as alcohol. In the illustration of the prostitute (fig. 10), a well-dressed woman stands in a trail marked with footprints (a symbol of travel and direction) and holds out a chalice to a seated male who is handing her a coin. The presence of money and a chalice--presumably filled with alcohol--indicates that a licentious transaction is occurring between the prostitute and the man.

Other significant images of pulque consumption in sixteenth-century native codices can be
found in the *Codex Magliabechiano* and the *Codex Mendoza*. Each image is drawn in the context of ritual drinking. The first image is found on folio 85 recto of the *Codex Magliabechiano* (fig. 11). Here the central pulque deity sips from a drinking tube that extends out of a vessel filled with the frothy intoxicant. Surrounding the deity are images of various men and women drinking and holding bowls of pulque. The gloss in the upper left corner of the folio next to three bundled cords reads: “These bundles are of a root with which they made the wine that they call ocpatl.” 8

Below the right foot of the pulque deity is the gloss: “This was the [woman] who served the wine to the others until they became drunk”. Below the text is the woman to whom the text refers. She is holding up a small bowl of pulque as well as another unidentified object in her other hand. Like two of the other three women in the scene, she is seated with her feet underneath her. The only woman who is not seated in this manner is drawn below the three cords of root. She is depicted seated with her legs extended before her. From her mouth issues a multitude of painted dots akin to those representing the froth above the lid of each pulque vessel. It appears as though she has had too much to drink and is vomiting as a result. Although there is no gloss that indicates this, the image seems self-explanatory.

Folio 41 recto of the *Codex Magliabechiano* depicts another pulque-related scene (fig. 12). The text written on folio 40 verso--the facing folio of 41 recto--indicates that the scene opposite depicts two coexisting feasts, that of Hueypachtli and Pilahuana--the latter which translates into “drunkenness of the children, because during it the boys danced with the girls. And they all drank until they were drunk, and afterward they committed abominations and fornications with one another” (Boone, 1983: 197). In the text, the feast of Hueypachtli is associated with the goddess Xochiquetzal to whom the natives sacrificed a woman. Xochiquetzal, “epitomizes young female sexual powers, flowers, and pleasure, and in this regard was related to Ahuiateteo

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8 All translations of the text on this page are taken from in Boone (1983).
and excess” (Miller and Taube, 1993: 190). The association of Xochiquetzal with the feast of Pilahuana, then, is a fitting one since excessive sexual behavior followed excessive drinking. The scene, however, describes these associations and consequences only symbolically. Here a young boy and girl face one another and drink from frothing bowls of pulque. Behind the boy stands a pulque goddess, probably Xochiquetzal. Above the boy and girl is drawn a stylized hill topped with a contracting serpent (a symbol for Xochiquetzal). The motif between the goddess and the serpent-hill may be a stylized flower, which is diagnostic of Xochiquetzal. In any case, although the text on folio 40 recto speaks disapprovingly of the abominations and fornications in which the drunken youth took part, the imagery does not reflect the tone of the commentary. It is noteworthy to add that the text in the Codex Magliabechiano is written in Spanish by a later hand thus indicating it was written for a Spanish audience. Such condemning language, then, may reflect Spanish attitudes rather than native ones, even though the scribe was likely a native.10

The Codex Mendoza was made by a native tlacuilo (artist/scribe) in the mid-sixteenth century. Commissioned by the Viceroy of New Spain, Don Antonio de Mendoza, the manuscript was intended for Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor. The tlacuilo of the Codex Mendoza and its scribe were, thus, aware that the intended audience would be European royalty. Three scenes from two folios of the manuscript include images of pulque and drunkenness. Each scene belongs to the third section of the codex which illustrates certain events from the daily lives of the Aztecs.11 The first occurrence of a pulque-related scene is ritualistic: a wedding (fig. 13).

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9 The Ahuiaateo were gods who were associated with the negative consequences of excessive pleasure and behavior. For a definition of the Ahuiaateo see (Miller and Taube, 1993: 40).

10 The argument that native texts from the colonial period may not be entirely accurate in their description of native customs and daily life due to the scribes’ wishes to please their Spanish patrons or audience, is well known. For a discussion of this see León Portilla (1992).

11 The first two sections illustrate the history of Tenochtitlan and the Mexica, and tribute owed to the Aztec capital, respectively.
This scene represents a woman and man seated on a mat and bound together by the tying of the woman’s *huipil*, or shirt, to the man’s cape. The binding of huipil and cape symbolically represents their union as husband and wife. Above the mat a bowl of copal incense is drawn (just below an oven where the incense burns). Enclosed in a rectangular area, the couple is surrounded by two male and female elders who are seated at each corner of the space. Their mouths are open and blue speech scrolls issue from them indicating speech. Directly below the newly-wed couple, a basket of toasted maize, a pot of turkey stew, and a pitcher and small bowl of pulque are drawn. The pulque is identified by the numerous dots representing its frothiness above the rims of both vessels, as well as the crescent-shaped moon design—worn as nose ornaments by the pulque deities—imprinted on the them. This image implies that pulque was consumed for ritualistic events like weddings. William Taylor (1979: 33) writes that the mass consumption of pulque is recorded for such events “as well as during feasts dedicated to a particular god. The drinking celebrations were prolonged affairs, lasting for several days or more”. In addition to textual accounts of ritual drinking, the ritual and religious use of pulque is well-documented in the early colonial native codices.

The next scene in the *Codex Mendoza* that depicts pulque and pulque consumption includes glosses that explain the use of pulque among the natives (fig. 14). At the top of this folio, six figures are drawn to represent the victims of punishable crimes of pre-Hispanic Mexico. Three of these figures—two men and one woman—are drawn horizontally and with closed eyes, indicating they are dead. At the mouth of each figure a bowl of pulque is drawn, denoting that their crimes were pulque-related. The glosses that accompany these figures indicate that their crime was becoming drunk. Below this scene, on the same folio, are drawn the images of a drunk elderly man and woman. The text surrounding the man suggests why drinking was a crime for the three figures above. It reads: “Old man of seventy years who was allowed, both in public and in
private, to drink wine and get drunk, because he is so old and because he has children and grandchildren; on account of their age they were not forbidden to drink and get drunk". Thus, the figures above were sentenced to death for becoming drunk essentially because they were underage. Their youthful appearance contrasts markedly to the elderly couple below. The age of the old man is indicated by his white hair and facial wrinkles. He is depicted seated on a mat and speaking (indicated by blue speech scroll that issues forth from his open mouth). His grandchildren who are mentioned in the text stand at either side of him. Their youth and low social status are expressed by the diminutive size in which they are drawn. The grandson is holding onto his grandfather's arm in a gesture that suggests he is trying to move his grandfather from where he is seated. A speech scroll issuing from his mouth indicates he is speaking to his grandfather. Meanwhile, the granddaughter stands in front of the old man leaning forward with arms outstretched before her. She, too, is speaking to her grandfather as a blue speech scroll issuing from her mouth indicates. The old man seems determined to remain where he is seated and the large speech scroll issuing from his mouth may indicate the volume of his voice and consequently, the heightened state of his drunkenness.

Below the figure of the drunken man and his grandchildren is a old woman who is also drawn in an inebriated state. She holds a bowl of frothing pulque to her lips and speaks at the same time. Behind her, her granddaughter hold onto her arm and speaks while her grandson stands behind his sister in a gesture that suggests he is assisting. The text around her head reads: "Old woman, wife of the old man in the drawing shown previously, who therefore had the privilege and liberty to get drunk like her husband and because she had children and grandchildren; drunkenness was not prohibited to persons of that age". Diego Durán (1971: 309) explains the

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\[12\] Translation taken from The Codex Mendoza, (Ross, 1978).

\[13\] Translation taken from The Codex Mendoza, (Ross, 1978).
privileges native elders had in pre-Columbian and early colonial central Mexico: "and there was an ancient law prohibiting anyone, under pain of death, to drink pulque unless he had children to restrain him and guide him if he became intoxicated so that he would not fall into a river or a hole or have a mortal accident".

The Codex Mendoza, in its text concerning pulque and drunkenness, explains the drinking privileges that those above the age of seventy had in pre-Hispanic Tenochtitlan. In addition, it explains how for those who did not enjoy these privileges, the punishable consequence could mean death. The drinking of pulque for ceremonial events like weddings and religious feasts however, seems to have been, if not allowed, then common, as the marriage scene from the codex suggests. Taylor (1979: 28) asserts: "On ritual occasions when drinking was permitted, adult male participants could apparently drink themselves into a stupor without shame". He adds: "Women and children did drink on ceremonial occasions as shown in many examples, but there was a definite tendency to allow men more leeway to drink and participate in public ceremonies" (Taylor, 1979: 62).

**Non-native images of alcohol, drinking, and drunkenness in New Spain**

Soon after the Spanish arrived in what is now Mexico, European-style works of art began to take root. European artists flocked to the Americas to try to establish themselves as successful painters and sculptors. A guild system was established and for many years, only Spaniards or Creoles were theoretically allowed to work in this system, although natives and members of the casta races—the mixed racial inhabitants of the Americas—found ways to get in. Although the majority of European-style works of art produced in New Spain were religious in nature, a unique genre of secular paintings developed in the eighteenth century. Known as casta paintings, they were representations of the mixed races of New Spain. The format of the paintings was formulaic: a man, his wife, and their child along with text indicating their respective
Each painting depicts the family in an everyday life scene. Such scenes provide rare glimpses into the daily life of the inhabitants of New Spain as depicted by the artists and according to Spanish perceptions of the Other and self. To the author’s knowledge, casta paintings are the only non-native art genre that represents images of alcohol and drunkenness in New Spain. Because casta paintings date from the eighteenth to early-nineteenth centuries, the passage of time must be considered when comparing them to the native codices of the sixteenth century. Despite the change in chronology, however, casta paintings provide a unique picture of Spanish prejudices and thoughts on alcohol and drunkenness in relation to the non-Spanish inhabitants of New Spain; these prejudices and thoughts did not change for much of the colonial period. Combined with information collected from primary and secondary literary sources, a more comprehensive picture of these thoughts and prejudices can be constructed.

Pulque is not an uncommon element in casta painting scenes. Neither is different types of alcohol. It is insightful to note what types of alcoholic beverages are associated with whom and who is associated with drunkenness. Although it is clear that Spaniards drank pulque—recall Motolinia’s (1951: 331) comment that the Spaniard drank pulque as it was known to be nourishing and wholesome—Indians were still primarily associated with it. Yet, R. Douglas Cope (1994: 34) writes that in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Spaniards and castas (the racially mixed inhabitants of the Americas) had become the most important consumers of pulque. There existed a double-standard among the Spaniards of New Spain, then: those who abhorred the consumption of pulque (many of the religious, for example) and those who drank it themselves. There was a third party of Spaniards who approved of the substance, namely, entrepreneurs and government officials. Some wealthy Spanish entrepreneurs invested in the pulque business and expanded on their fortunes while the government benefited from heavily taxing those who produced and sold the drink (Cope, 1994: 38). Taylor (1979: 13) explains that
pulque was heavily commercialized in New Spain a century after the conquest and that it had become an economic necessity for many Indian villages near Mexico City. Much of the pulque produced in satellites villages around Mexico City provided the city’s pulquerias—bars or taverns where pulque was sold—with their product (Taylor, 1979: 66).

Despite Spanish involvement in the production and consumption of pulque, in both native manuscripts and casta paintings, Spaniards are never visually associated with pulque. On the contrary, mostly Indians and the castas are shown with the drink. In 9. De India y Negro, Loba, (fig. 15) by an anonymous eighteenth-century Mexican artist, an Indian woman is depicted dipping a cup into a large vat of pulque. Unlike the iconographical frothiness of the drink represented in the native codices examined in this study, here, the pulque is just represented as a white, milky liquid. The woman’s Black husband is drawn standing on the other side of the vat of pulque. In the foreground, their loba child (the racial offspring of their respective racial backgrounds), whose back is facing the viewer, dips her hand into the vat of pulque. It is unclear where this scene takes place although given what is known of pulque venues, the setting is either at the marketplace or at this family’s residence

11. De Cambujo, e India, produce Sabaigo (fig. 16) by another anonymous eighteenth-century Mexican artist, resembles the format of the last painting: a family arranged around a large vat of pulque. Here, the Indian woman stands behind the vat of pulque while her husband stand on the other side of the vat and gestures to her. Their sambaigo son, in the foreground—back nearly facing the viewer entirely—holds up a bowl of pulque to his mouth from which he drinks. In addition to the multitude of bowls depicted on the shelf behind the woman—besides those on the table behind her husband—the presence of two vats of pulque suggest that the setting is either at the marketplace or at a residence where pulque is sold to the public. The image of the child

According to Taylor (1979: xx) pulque was legally and illegally sold in the market place and from private residences as well.
consuming pulque may be intended as a negative comment on the lack of restraint that natives as well as castas had on their children. The condemning tone of Diego Durán (1971: 446)—who two centuries earlier wrote that, to his knowledge, natives of all ages and both sexes drank pulque, “Even newborn sucklings are given pulque by their mothers with their fingers when the mothers are imbibing”—was still expressed by many Spaniards in eighteenth-century New Spain.

The widespread drinking of pulque among natives did increase after the conquest as Spanish sumptuary laws dissolved pre-Columbian regulations of pulque consumption. While widespread drinking of alcohol was common among natives in the colonial period, it is important to note the different types of consumption patterns that existed so as not to make general conclusions about the weakness natives had for alcohol: a common stereotype.

William Taylor (1979) has made insightful observations concerning native drinking patterns in colonial Mexico which challenge the widespread stereotype about degeneracy among natives groups as a result of alcoholism. One of the points made in his study is the syncretism of traditional drinking patterns with feast days from the Christian calendar (Taylor, 1979: 40). Because native conversion to Christianity was not as complete as once thought\textsuperscript{15}, Christian observances were incorporated into the native framework of ritual. It has been observed that ritual drinking was an integral component of many pre-Columbian ceremonies. With the incorporation of Christian feasts into the ritual calendar of the natives, there came to be more religious and ceremonial occasions to consume alcohol.

In addition to the incorporation of Christian feast days and celebrations, pulque was also widely consumed on a day-to-day basis. Because in many part of Mexico water was—and still is—scarce, and available water sources were often brackish or contaminated, the vitamin-rich

\textsuperscript{15} For a good discussion of the failure of the so-called “spiritual conquest” of the natives of New Spain, see Klor de Alva (1982).
pulque was often substituted for water, especially during the dry months of the year (Taylor, 1979: 30). The scenes that Spaniards witnessed of native men, women, and children drinking pulque could have, in some cases, been a result of not having available sources of drinking water.

Scenes of children sipping from cups of pulque are not uncommon in casta paintings. Another example is 15. De Albarasada y Mulato, nace barcino (fig. 17) by an anonymous eighteenth-century Mexican painter. Following the prescriptive format of such scenes, the albarasada woman stands behind a vat of pulque and looks to her mulato husband while he looks back at her and points to their barcino child. The child, meanwhile, drinks from a small cup of pulque. Behind the woman, shelves of dishware indicate the domestic setting of this scene. Like the families represented with pulque in the last two paintings discussed, none of the members of this family are Spanish. Of all the artists of casta paintings the author has studied, never is a Spanish man or woman visually associated with pulque. This is not to say that they are never represented with other types of alcohol.

2. De Español y Castiza, nace Castiza (fig. 18) by an anonymous eighteenth-century Mexican artist is a case in point. Here a Spanish man offers a glass of clear alcohol to a castiza woman. The castiza woman—the offspring of Spanish and mestizo parents—holds her child in one arm and raises her other hand in a gesture which may indicate refusal of the glass her husband is holding up to her. The Spanish man stands behind a counter on which is set a bottle of liquor. Behind him are shelves of glass bottles and containers presumably filled with alcohol. This is in contrast to the vats and bowls used by Indians and castas in the paintings discussed above.

José Joaquín Magón, the eighteenth-century artist from Puebla, painted VII. Albino y Española, Los que producen de torna átras en figura, genio y costumbres (fig. 19). Depicted are a drunken Spanish wife, her drunken albino husband and their torna átras son whose African features come from his father’s mixed African ancestry. Both parents are depicted in relaxed and
swaying poses. Their body language, as well as the bottle and chalice that the \textit{albino} man is holding, betray their inebriated states. Although the general tone of the painting is almost comical, the racial undertones project a more serious picture. Because African blood was thought of as a contaminant, the drunkenness of the \textit{albino} man may be a commentary on the degenerative nature of those of African ancestry. Since respectable Spanish women were not to act improperly—as the woman in Magón’s painting is—the painting may be a warning to Spanish women about marrying beneath their own racial group, especially to someone of African heritage.\footnote{See Giraud (1987) for a discussion of prescriptive behavior for Spanish women in New Spain. In addition, see Fernandez Lizardi (1897) as a primary source concerned with proper behavior for Spanish women of the late colonial period in New Spain.} It may also be a comment on the inherent moral weakness of women.\footnote{See Vives (2000) and Fernandez Lizardi (1897) for historical discussions pertaining to the morally degenerative nature of women.} Nowhere among extant casta paintings are Spanish men depicted drunk. The lack of drunken Spaniards in the casta paintings reflects Spanish attitudes on drinking: for Spanish men, it was seen as a weakness to show signs of drunkenness. A respectable Spanish gentleman was to never show signs of intoxication. Instead he was to drink in moderation and maintain his comportment. This mentality is expressed in Don Bartolomé de Alva’s confesionario of 1634 (92): “And even though the ancients your elders drank, it was with moderation and restraint (as your neighbors the Spaniards do today)”. For Spaniards in Mexico, “drunkard” was of the most offensive insults one could utter (Taylor, 1979: 41).

Images of drunken men do appear in the casta paintings of New Spain, though, as already mentioned, never are they Spaniards. In \textit{De Mestiza y Mulato produce Campamulata} (fig. 20)—an eighteenth-century painting by an anonymous Mexican artist—a \textit{mestiza} woman and her \textit{campamulata} daughter sit behind a table and gaze at a drunken \textit{mulato} man (the father of the \textit{mestizo} woman’s daughter). His drunkenness is betrayed by his glossy eyes, limp posture, and
empty glass set on the table before his wife and daughter. Like the albino man in the last painting, this mulato—the offspring of Spanish and African parents—is of partial African heritage.

Finally, Francisco Clapera's painting 15. De Genizaro, y Mulata Gibaro (fig. 21) from the eighteenth-century, depicts a mulata woman and her gibaro son attempting to rouse the drunken family patriarch: a genizaro man. Here, the genizaro man is sprawled on the ground, outside an entryway. The poverty of the man is evident in his torn pants, bare feet, and lack of shirt. The extreme state of his drunkenness has caused him to collapse on the ground as he is unable to stand on his own. Such a state of drunkenness among Spanish men—though not unheard of—would have been a great embarrassment to their dignity and that of their families.

Scenes like the one represented in Clapera’s painting were not uncommon to the inhabitants of Mexico City. There are many documented cases of extreme intoxication among natives and castas in the capital city.18 William Taylor (1979: 37) has argued, however, that what was the norm in Mexico City was not necessarily so for villages and other cities. Because the marketplace of Mexico City attracted many travelers and merchants from other parts of New Spain, the city became a place of decadence and unrestrained drinking. Taylor writes that for pulque traders in Mexico City and other traders who came into the city, it “was a time-out setting, an island of temporary personal liberty where the village rules of drinking and social respect did not apply” (Taylor, 1979: 37).

The early nineteenth-century Scottish author of Life in Mexico, Fanny Calderón de la Barca (1987: 261), commented on the degeneracy of Mexico City and the widespread drunkenness in which the natives partook:

This being Sunday, and a fête-day, a man was murdered close by our door
in a quarrel brought about probably through the influence of pulque, or rather

18 See Taylor (1979) and Cope (1994) for a discussion of such cases.
of chinguirite. If they did not so often end in a deadly quarrel, there would be nothing so amusing as to watch the Indians gradually becoming a little intoxicated. They are at first so polite—handing the pulque-jar to their fair companions (fair being taken in the general Pickwickian sense of the word); always taking off their hats to each other, and if they meet a woman, kissing her hand with a humble bow as if she were a duchess;—but these same women are sure to be the cause of quarrel, and then out comes these horrible knives—and then,

Adios!

Calderón de la Barca was astonished at the amount of alcohol the natives of New Spain consumed and offers her thoughts on pre-Hispanic patterns of drinking (1987: 94): “The maguey, and its produce, pulque, were known to the Indians in the most ancient times, and the primitive Aztecs may have become as intoxicated on their favorite octli, as they called it, as the modern Mexicans do on their beloved pulque”.

This statement, written by Calderón de la Barca at the beginning of the nineteenth century, does not only represent popular opinions of natives and drinking at the time it was written, but echoes the comments and criticisms made by Spaniards living in New Spain in past centuries, since the time of the conquest. The combination of natives, castas, and pulque was what Spaniards blamed for the famous Mexico City corn riot of 1692 (Cope, 1994: 139). In the minds of the Spanish, natives consumed alcohol because of their weakness, their inherent decadent nature, and their lack of Christian values. Laws passed by the Spanish on the sale of pulque also reflect racial biases. In 1760 a royal ordinance was passed forbidding anyone, regardless of their race, to sell pulque from their homes or other unauthorized places. Spaniards who violated this law were jailed for three days on the first offense. A second offense required them to leave the community for two years. Natives, Blacks, and castas, on the other hand,
“suffered the usual corporal punishment and were subject to four years of hard labor besides” (Dusenberry, 1948: 294).

Rarely is the association of Indian drinking patterns with ritual feasts and religious ceremonies made by Spaniards in the visual and written records. In addition, as Taylor (1979: 41) points out, what Spaniards viewed as native decadence, was, in the eyes of the natives, not necessarily so. He writes: “Indians defined moderate drinking according to traditional conceptions of appropriate occasions and gastronomic privileges rather than according to the amount consumed or whether the drinkers showed their intoxication” (Taylor, 1979: 41). For many natives, the amount of alcohol consumed in religious ceremonies was proportionate to one’s devotion (Taylor, 1979: 39). Spanish understanding of native drinking patterns and behavior was not deep and as a result, what the natives may have seen as a part of ritual or an opportunity to behave freely without the consequence of village regulations on drinking, was not perceived by the Spaniards. Images of alcohol and drunkenness in the casta paintings of New Spain reflect Spanish prejudices and understanding of these issues.

Conclusion

As the aim of this study was to examine images of alcohol, drinking, and drunkenness in the artwork of New Spain, a number of native and European works of art spanning three centuries—the sixteenth to eighteenth century—were analyzed. Selected ethnographic materials—primary sources of extant literature—provided the thread of context that links the native codices of the sixteenth century to the Spanish casta paintings of the eighteenth century. In studying both genres in conjunction with the pertinent primary and secondary sources available, a picture of differing perceptions of alcohol and drinking can be constructed. In addition, the nature and limits of the information conveyed by works of art come to surface.

Much of what we know of the native manufacture and consumption of alcohol from the
pre-Columbian and colonial period comes from Spanish sources: the insightful but biased works of Diego Durán, Motolinia, and other proto-ethnographers of the colonial period. Other, mundane documents from the colonial period--legal documents, criminal records, and other government records--none of which were examined in this study due to limits of time and resources--also offer glimpses into the production and use of alcohol. Native images of alcohol and drinking, however, offer modern scholars insight into the mindframe of native populations concerning these issues. Likewise, Spanish images of the same subject express Spanish mentality and provide important information not available in the extant documents and literature of the period.

The religious and ritualistic representations of alcohol and drinking in the native codices of the sixteenth century contrast sharply with the secular and racial-based imagery of alcohol and drinking found in casta paintings. These differing representative models correspond well with the information provided in the ethnographic primary sources as well as secondary sources available on the subject. For natives, alcohol had an inherent religious significance. The use of pulque, in pre-Columbian times, was strictly regulated, and severe consequences awaited those who did not observe them. Except for the Codex Mendoza and the Florentine Codex--two manuscripts commissioned by Spanish patrons--secular or non-ritual aspects of alcohol consumption are not represented in native codices. Spanish involvement in the making of a codex seems to have had a profound effect on what tlacuilos represented or left out. This involvement is also evident in the Codex Magliabecchiano. Although the images in the manuscript are done mostly in the native style, the Spanish text interpreting the accompanying imagery clearly addresses a Spanish reader. References to various deities as demons, and condemnation of certain native ceremonies betray Spanish influence. The negative tone found in Sahagún’s Florentine Codex concerning alcohol and drunkenness--in both text and illustrations--may have also been a means to appease Sahagún and
other members of the clergy who looked unfavorably upon alcohol-consumption among the natives.

Codices not intended for Spanish readers, however, are free of non-ritualistic representations of alcohol and alcohol consumption. In these codices, pulque, pulque deities and pulque consumption are strictly represented in a religious and ritual context. Given the religious implications of pulque consumption, it is not surprising that Christian celebrations and feast days were commemorated by the natives with festivities that involved ritual drinking. Spaniards would have understandably interpreted such behavior as heathenous and disrespectful. Such opinions are amply found in the literature of the period.

Unlike native imagery of alcohol and consumption, the casta paintings represent the same subjects in a purely secular form. Devoid of any ritualistic or religious significance those portrayed drinking or standing next to vats of pulque are Indians and various members of the casta races. In only one case is a Spanish woman depicted drunk. She, however, is the wife to a racially inferior albino, who, because of his partial African ancestry, was not believed to possess the same moral and intellectual qualities as a Spaniard. For this reason, it may be inferred that the reason for his wife’s drunkenness is a direct result of her husband’s inferior racial makeup and, by extension, his general inferiority to Spaniards in all respects including temperance. It must be remembered that Spanish gentlemen were not to indulge in alcohol and were to keep their comportment at all times. To be called a “drunk” was severe insult among Spaniards. Because casta paintings were commissioned by Spanish patrons19, it comes as no surprise that Spanish men are never depicted consuming alcohol or in a drunken state. Images of drunkenness, however, occur among non-Spaniards, mostly in the casta races. This is not a full reflection of reality, however, since Spaniards and castas were neither strangers to pulque.

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Though the vast majority of artists who produced casta paintings are anonymous, common characteristics found throughout the genre suggest that their racial backgrounds did not have a profound impact on how they represented their subjects. The key to understanding the racial representations of casta paintings is to have some understanding of their patrons' tastes.

The representation of *casta* children drinking from bowls and cups of pulque also occurs in casta paintings. Although this may have actually been a common sight in New Spain, the likely reason for it was not due to inherent degeneracy—a common Spanish notion of natives as well as *castas*—but the lack or scarcity of drinking water and the subsequent consumption of pulque as a substitute. Diego Durán may not have realized this when he criticized the widespread consumption of alcohol among natives of both sexes and all age groups, including infants.

The native imagery and casta paintings examined in this paper are not descriptive accounts of their societies. Rather, like all works of art, they are prescriptive portrayals as they represent certain aspects of the ideologies of their respective societies. In this case, they represent the mindset of natives and Spaniards from New Spain concerning issues of alcohol and alcohol consumption. For the natives, whose codices were made for religious and political purposes, images of pulque and drinking were represented in a strict iconographical format that reflects their official ritual use. When Spanish audiences were anticipated by the *tlacuilos*, text and imagery changed to suit European expectations and desires. These works do not reflect native understanding of the subjects portrayed so much as they reflect the association and interaction between native artists and their colonial patrons or audiences. As for Spanish attitudes and understanding of alcohol and consumption represented in casta paintings, no reference is made to the important ritual significance pulque had to the natives. Instead, as immoderate consumption of alcohol was seen as a vice, such images are expressed exclusively
among Indians and the *casta* races. To acknowledge native associations between alcohol and religion would mean recognizing a cultural continuity in native society that persisted into the late colonial period. In addition, it would disprove Spanish explanations of drinking behavior observed among natives and acknowledge the cultural sophistication of the latter, which the Spanish largely denied in order to assert the legitimacy of their presence and perceived superiority over the natives of New Spain.
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Figure 1
Pulque vessel. Detail from Codex Magliabechiano,
Folio 85 recto.
Figure 2

Deity and *trecena, malinalli*. Detail from ritual calendar (*tonalpohualli*) of *Codex Borgia*, plate 68.
Figure 3
Mayahuel, patron deity of the day name Rabbit. Detail from plate 12 of the Codex Borgia.
Figure 4
The pulque god, Patecatl. Folio 15 verso of the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis*.
Figure 5
The pulque deity, Colhuaca cuicatl. Folio 56 recto of the Codex Magliabechiano.
Figure 6
Festival "Ochpaniztli" with Huaxtec participants. Page 29 of the Codex Borbonicus.
Figure 7
The pulque deity Tlaltecayoa and monkey impersonator. Folio 55 recto of the Codex Magliabechiano.
Figure 8
Bad nobleman from the Florentine Codex.
Figure 9
Lewd youth from the Florentine Codex.
Figure 10
Prostitute from the Florentine Codex.
Figure 11
Ritual drinking. Folio 85 recto of the Codex Magliabechiano.
Figure 12
The feast of Hueypachtli and Pilahuana. Folio 41 recto of the Codex Magliabechiano.
Figure 13
Wedding feast. *Codex Mendoza*.
Figure 14
Punishments for pulque-consumption (top register) and elderly couple
Consuming pulque (bottom register).
Figure 15
Anonymous artist. *De India y Negro, Loba*. Eighteenth century.
Figure 16
Anonymous artist. 11. De Cambujo, e India, produce Sambaigo.
Eighteenth century.
Figure 17
Figure 18
Figure 19
José Joaquín Magón. VII. Albino y Española. Los que producen torna átras en figura, genio, y costumbres. Eighteenth century.
Figure 20
Figure 21