CHAPTER 10

Powerful Words and Eloquent Images

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The *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*, known as the Florentine Codex (1575–1577) in its final edition, is a bilingual encyclopedia that encompasses many aspects of the Nahua culture and people of central Mexico before and after the conquest.[1] The Florentine Codex was handwritten and painted by a team of Nahua scholars and artists collaborating with fray Bernardino de Sahagún at the Colegio de Santa Cruz Tlatelolco—the first higher education institution in the Americas.[2] Sahagún in the prologue to Book 2 mentions by name four of the Nahua "wise men," or *tlamatinime*, whom he calls *gramáticos principales* (principal grammarians), who assisted him in writing the twelve books: Antonio Valeriano, Alonso Vegerano, Martín Jacovita, and Pedro de San Buenaventura.[3] Through their characteristic style of draftsmanship, I have identified twenty-two Nahua artists, or *tlacuiloque* (plural of *tlacuilo*), who participated in the creation of the images. Four of them were deemed "master painters" for the conceptual sophistication of their paintings and their excellent draftsmanship.[4] These four master painters could very well be the four grammarians mentioned by Sahagún. The close relationship between written text and image in the Florentine Codex may shed some light onto the nature of their practice as intellectual leaders of the project, for if they were considered *tlamatinime* (singular *tlamatini*, "he who knows something"), keepers and creators of knowledge, they would have mastered the ancient way of writing through images.[5]

In this chapter, I review some significant ways in which the bicultural creators of the Florentine Codex (the *tlamatinime* and *tlacuiloque*) connected the handwritten alphabetic texts (a form of recording knowledge that is of European origin) with the images (which are related to the ancient Mesoamerican tradition of writing through painting). I focus on two fundamental categories of Nahua culture: the concept of "words of the ancient ones," *huehuetlahtolli*,[6] linked to what we refer to as the transmission of knowledge through "oral tradition," and the practice of painting as a creative action linked to the primeval time when the gods gave form to the world, called *in tlilli in tlapalli*, "black ink, red ink."[7] I also focus on how some images become *ixiptla*, a Nahua concept that has been translated as "substitute," or "impersonator."[8] I propose that the concept of *ixiptla* or *teixiptla* can also be understood as "living image," or "image/presence," and that the materiality of the paintings themselves was motivated by this ontological concept.[9] I focus on the first and second books, which concern the gods and their festivities, for, as Guilhem Olivier notes, in describing the religious festivities in these books, the artists painted acts of devotion and offerings that were presented to sculptures representing the gods, but these sculptures were actually depicted as living persons.[10] In this regard, these late sixteenth-century Nahua paintings of the gods would have been made as performative agents that guided the relationship between text and image.[11]

TLAHTOLLI, "THE ANCIENT/ POWERFUL WORDS"

Tlahtolli, a Nahuatl word translated as language, discourse, or speech, has a particular reference to the narratives that keep cultural memory alive. In most Mesoamerican traditions, and specifically for the ancient Nahua, these "powerful words" were recorded as "paintings" in books made with bark paper or deer hide folded in an accordion fashion.[12] These images were decoded by the initiated reader *tlamatini*, who uttered *tlahtolli* preserved as oral tradition.[13] John Monaghan and Mark King have both shown how in the ancient Mixtec traditions sacred texts, which were also composed of images, contained what they have referred to as the script for the performance of histories. Images thus served as notation of a larger performative narrative that could be danced, sang, or recited, and as such, images had the agency of reactualizing memory, history, myth, and ritual.[14] Furthermore, as King posits, painted books are termed *tacu* ("to paint," "to hear," "to listen") in Mixtec, a word that implies both representation and recitation, and were also referred to as *tutu* ("page," "design," "to whistle"), a word related to *toto* ("to sing"). Thus, books connected metaphorically meaning, performance, sound, and painting.[15] The performative nature of these powerful words is made evident in the sixteenth-century Nahua manuscript known as *Cantares mexicanos*. Although the manuscript is rendered in alphabetic writing, the songs themselves reveal a unique, distinctive tradition where the singing itself becomes palpable, materializing an ulterior world formed by music and precious materials such as jade, flowers, and feathers, and thus relating *tlahtolli* with these meaningful materials.[16]

Pedro Pitarch explains that for the Tzeltal Maya peoples of Chiapas, as for other Amerindian cultures today, the "ancient words," as opposed to the quotidian language or "new words," refer to the primeval narratives of origins (legends), the ritual dialogues, the shamanic chants, and certain songs and music.[17] These "ancient words" do not exist in the ordinary solar world but on the "other side," a sacred realm that has a different ontological status and that can be accessed only through ritual and dreams. There in that other place, sometimes called the "underworld" by Mesoamerican scholars, the ancient words, and the images that help to represent them, reside. Pitarch calls these images "cuerpo-presencia" (body-presence); in Tzeltal Maya, *winikel*, from *win*, "to appear," "to show itself."[18] This idea is similar to the concept of *ixiptla* in Nahuatl.[19] It is through a specialized process that both the words and the images are brought from the "other side" into our time and place. The ritual specialists who do this are "wise men," *tlamatinime*, keepers of their tradition. I want to propose here that the paintings in the Florentine Codex help to transform the Nahuatl and Spanish texts into ritual discourse, song, or performance that carries on *tlahtolli*. That is, without the images the alphabetic texts would not reflect the power of the "ancient words," the *tlahtolli* of the Nahua. The images serve to add a necessary layer of meaning—a ritual or supernatural meaning. In this sense, the images enable the books of the Florentine Codex to become *tlahtolli*. Reading both images and texts in the proper manner would be equivalent to Nahuatl song, expressed by the metaphorical couplet *in xochitl in cuicatl*, "the flower, the song," the correct enunciation of *tlahtolli*—as performative action that is different from merely reading the texts.[20] Moreover, as León-Portilla has remarked, the *tlamatinime* were the keepers of knowledge, for "*in tlilli in tlapalli* [the black ink, the red ink] belonged to them, to them belonged the codices."[21] Without these images painted with a black outline filled with many colors (*tlapalli* in the couplet can also be translated as "all the colors") there was no knowledge, no *tlahtolli* to be recited. As King has observed, there are multicolored scrolls in the Mixtec Codex Vienna that evoke sacred, living energy emanating from the smoke of copal offerings, from the first rising of the sun in mythic times, from music, and from the speech of historic characters. These multicolored scrolls, King concludes, are a representation of "song" as "a spiritually heated offering that rises skyward."[22]

As Pedro Pitarch has proposed in his translation of the shamanic chants and prayers of the Tzeltal Maya of the Altos de Chiapas, the action of pronouncing songs (the powerful, sacred words) is conceived by the Tzeltal as an "unfolding," as when flowers open to release their scent. The words of the sacred chants come from "the other side" into this solar world through dreams. The words, and the visions (the images), are thought to live on the other side in an ancient book. The Tzeltal dreamer keeps the words and images of the book in his or her heart. The sacred words, Pitarch further explains, come into this world folded, inverted, closed in a wrapper; the songs sung in the ritual throughout the night help the shaman to "unfold them, to open them as flowers, and it is then when these words

can perform their power."[23] This same concept is an essential part of Nahua song, for as Tomilson explains, referring to the *Cantares mexicanos*, these songs routinely feature flowers that reveal the "sacred immanence of fragile earthy things." Flowers, as human lives, fade quickly, but the singing evokes their substance, and "song and flower undergo the sacred transformation of the material here-and-now."[24] The Nahua contributors to the Florentine Codex refer to the same ideas about the supernatural origins of art and song, whereby the "good artist," the *toltecatl*, is described as someone who knows how to dialogue with his own heart (where the book of knowledge is kept), who has the presence of the sacred in his heart, and who knows how to compose chants, music, and song.[25] If the images in the Florentine Codex transform the handwritten texts into "ancient words," or *tlahtolli*, the process of painting can be understood as an unfolding—in a similar manner to the unfolding and vocalizing of the shamanic chants; that is, the *tlacuiloque*, the painters, "unfold" the images from the otherworld and bring them into the solar world, the present, through the process of painting. In fact, the Nahua song "In Your Painting Place" clearly describes this process and the role of the painters as cocreators with the gods:

> You paint with flowers, with songs, Life Giver. You color the ones who will live on earth, you recite them in colors, and so you are hatching eagles, jaguars, in your painting place. You are here on earth!
> (xochitica oo / totlatlacuilohuan ipalnemohuani cuicatica oo
> toco tlapalaquiya tocotlapalpohua y nemitz i tlalticpacco yc
> tictlatlapana cuauhyotl oçeloyotl y motlacuilolpani ça tiyanemim ye nican i tpacca ohuaya ohuaya)
>
> And so you are giving outline to these comrades, these companions, these nobles. In colors you recite the ones who will live on earth, and so you are hatching eagles, jaguars, in your painting place. You are here on earth!
> (yc tictlilania cohuayotl / a yn icniuhyotl a y tecpilotl huiya
> tocotlapalpuhua y nemitzi y tlalticpaco yc tictlatlapana cuayotl
> oçeloyotl y motlacuilolpani çã tiya nemi ye nican i tpaca ohuaya ohuaya.)[26]

This song is actually describing the power of paintings to create the world. Life as we know it in this solar time is the unfolding of words and images of the otherworld. Paintings, reliefs, sculptures, and monuments, such as the pyramids, were the flesh and the bones of the created world—a layered visualization of the ancient primeval world of myth. Through these works the ancient peoples kept memories of mythical time, of creation that was recreated each time through the poetic reading of paintings, *tlahtolli*.[27]

In the following section I will focus on the way images and texts work together as *tlahtolli* in the first two books of the Florentine Codex, which deal with gods, rituals, and religious festivities. However, I precede my analysis of these two first books by describing the process of painting as meaningful, using the concept of "unfolding" presented by Pitarch. As the "correct" enunciation of the shamanic chants unfolds the power of the words, the correct process of painting allows for the "unfolding" of visions into the creation of living images, or *ixiptla*.

MEANINGFUL PAINTING MATERIALS

In the book *Colors of the New World* I employ scientific and art historical methods to explain the process of painting the Florentine Codex as a practice imbued with meaning.[28] Chapter 11 in Book 11 of the Florentine Codex is devoted to "the making of all the colors." Calling that chapter a "Nahua Treatise on Painting," I describe how the *tlacuiloque*, by employing two different resources—painting and writing—document the natural sources for the pigments, how the colors were produced, and how the artists painted with them. The *tlacuiloque* conceived of the colors as a system of binary oppositions or complementary polarities—the same polarities that constitute the living world. They distinguish two realms from which colors are obtained: those made with flowers and insects, living matter that depends on the energy of the sun; and those made with minerals found beneath the ground, which do not need the sun to exist, and actually represent the deep, humid, and dark energy of the earth and the underworld. The Nahua believed that the world itself was created by these complementary oppositions: the deities that belonged to the underworld, where only moonlight existed, were akin to colors made with minerals; the divine forces that belonged to the realm of the sun were akin to the colors made out of flowers and insects. In this manner painting was a creative act in which the materials mimicked the forces of nature. Thus, the making of a painting, its sheer materiality, sup-

ports the idea of imagining the images as "living presences" and *ixiptla* that resulted from the "unfolding" of a vision brought from the otherworld into the present.

The power of the materials of "song" (*in cuicatl in xochitl*)—that is, feathers, flowers, and jade—to bring forth the power of the otherworld into the present is clearly demonstrated by the proceedings against Nuño de Guzmán, the conquistador of Nueva Galicia, made in Huejotzingo in 1529 and analyzed by Alessandra Russo. Guzmán was accused of requesting that the chief of the town give him "an image of St. Mary made with gold, to take it with him to war." The council of elders of the town, however, decided that the image was not powerful enough to go into war and decided to commission an image of Mary made in gold and feathers. In order to accomplish this the council traded twenty slaves for "three gold ingots and nine green plumages." The proceedings from Huejotzingo describe in detail the length, color, and appearance of the plumages, explaining that these "precious feathers" were meant to protect the image. As Russo further notes, the witnesses in the document explain that the feathers had to be used as the enclosure or frame for the image of Mary, and that without them "the image simply would not have had the power needed."[29] The act of painting with the correct materials resembles the act of chanting described by Pitarch for the Tzeltal shamans—a process that has to be correctly performed to be effective, for painting, as well as enunciating the ancient words, is connected to the actions of the gods themselves when they created the world.[30]

BOOK 1, OF THE GODS

Book 1 of the Florentine Codex begins with six folios in which the paintings cover the entire surface. Each folio is divided into four rectangles that are occupied by the image of a particular deity; this presentation is of Mesoamerican origin (fig. 10.1). In the section "twenty deities and eighty days" from the Codex Borgia, the same strategy is used in the composition; the only difference is that the outline in the Codex Borgia is red, whereas in the Florentine Codex it is black.[31] This seemingly simple difference in color can have some significance. In the study of the pigments used in the Florentine Codex, the team of Italian scientists led by Dr. Piero Baglioni and me identified through X-ray fluorescence (XRF) that these frame lines were made with a charcoal-based black ink, the same pigment that was used to paint the outline of all the figures and to write the glosses inside the rectangles.[32] The glosses in Nahuatl and Spanish indicate three things: the original name of the deity in Nahuatl; the name in Spanish of a god from the Greek and Roman classical past that could be associated with the Mesoamerican god; and, finally, instructions that refer the reader to a section inside the first chapter of Book 1 explaining the attributes of the deity and the festivities in which the deity participated. The explanatory texts in the first chapter follow the format of the whole work, parallel columns in Nahuatl and Spanish written with iron gall ink, also identified with XRF. This ink, used only for the written parallel columns in Nahuatl and Spanish, has a distinctive dark-brown hue very different from the black charcoal pigment used in the glosses, the perimeter lines of the grid, and the outline of the figures (fig. 10.2).

The difference in the material nature of both inks (one being gall ink, the other carbon-based ink), and in the tonality of their color (the first being brownish, the second very black), helps to set aside these two groups of written texts: the first are the handwritten bilingual columns made with a gall-based ink; the second group is comprised by the glosses and the contour drawing lines of the figures and frames. The difference between the material nature and color of these two groups is a matter of importance: they establish different relationships between texts and images. The written glosses (regardless of the language in which they were written), the contour of the figures, and the rectangular containers seem to be grouped together, and it is likely they are related to a Mesoamerican tradition, for the carbon-black ink was known in the indigenous painting tradition long before the Spaniards arrived. The handwritten texts (regardless of the language) are different in their materiality and belong to the world of European writing; gall ink is European in origin and had never been used in the Americas. What is most significant about this finding is that it seems that the *tlacuiloque* were consciously creating a written and painted work that differentiates the handwritten texts in Nahuatl and Spanish from the images, relating the former to the European world and the latter to their indigenous tradition of painting. On the other hand, by grouping together the handwritten glosses, the frames, and the contour lines of the figures through the materiality of the ink used to make them, the *tlacuiloque* were also equating the text of the glosses to the images of the gods. The script written in carbon-black ink inside the rectangular frames where the gods live seems to have transformed writing into an image.

FIGURE 10.1. *The gods in the Florentine Codex. Bk. 1, fols. 11v and 12. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Med. Palat. 218–220. Courtesy of* MIBACT.

Pedro Pitarch has called attention to the fact that writing is the act of creating an image; that is, inscribing black lines onto a surface is considered a powerful act by the Tzeltal in Chiapas today not because of the meaning that the writing conveys but merely because of the way that writing creates different shapes with color over a surface. For the Tzeltal, writing is an emblem of power that comes from the "other side," just as the spots on the jaguars' coats and on the skin of powerful snakes—both are considered writing. Similarly, the Tzeltal Maya consider Europeans powerful because they had writing. As Pitarch observes, in the indigenous world it is always the powerful "others" who possess writing: the Europeans, the otherworld deities and powerful beings that could cause sickness. Disease, Pitarch further explains, is visualized as black and red spots—the combination of colors that Mesoamericans used to describe writing, *in tlilli in tlapalli*, "black ink, red ink," as a powerful text.

Thus the old Mesoamerican gods in Book 1 of the Florentine Codex acquired the newly discovered form of alphabetic writing as a sign of their power in the new world. However, the artists who created them placed black ink glosses inside the rectangular frames that contained the images of the gods and used writing as a mark of their power. Through these glosses, writing helped the traditional deities acquire the power of those ancient Greek and Roman gods with whom they were equated by the friars who oversaw the conversion of the indigenous *tlacuiloque*. Through the figurative texts of the glosses made in carbon-black ink, the *tlacuiloque* appropriated European writing and history. The gods in Book 1 are actually different from their old Mesoamerican counterparts; these gods are also European and bear writing as a proof of this new identity. The artists of the Florentine Codex created yet another layer of meaning between texts and images: there is a striking difference in the way that the Spanish and the Nahuatl explanatory texts relate to the paintings of

FIGURE 10.2. *Paynal. Florentine Codex, Bk. 1, fol. 10r. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Med. Palat. 218–220. Courtesy of* MIBACT.

the gods in Book 1. I will focus on the image of one single deity, but what I am going to present is valid for all of the gods in Book 1.[33]

The figure of Paynal (see fig. 10.2), the avatar of Huitzilopochtli, the Mexica patron deity, is richly dressed in a cape and feather headdress; he is in a seated position and in profile. The Spanish explanatory text of this image narrates the story of his festivity in which priests, dressed as Paynal, ran quickly through the city to exemplify the speed that warriors needed to achieve when facing the enemy.[34] The static image of Paynal in the first folio has nothing to do with the actions described in the Spanish description; thus the figure serves simply as a reference to the reader. However, the parallel Nahuatl narrative is closely tied to the painting, for the text focuses on the attributes of the costumes that define the god and describes them in detail, making the representation very close to the description in Nahuatl:

> He was dressed in this manner: He wore the costly cape made entirely of precious feathers. He also wore a feather headdress. His face was painted with stripes and with the symbols of stars. He wore on his nose a turquoise device. He was dressed as a hummingbird. He had a shield made with turquoise mosaic and wore a mirror on his chest.[35]

We learn that in Nahuatl what defines the deity is not his actions in the festivities but strictly what he wears. Paynal is his attributes. Among these attributes, the most important ones are the royal blue cape (*xiuhtlapalli tilmahtli*), made with the precious blue-green feathers of hummingbirds and turquoise appliques, and the turquoise shield (*xiuhtlapalli chimalli*). Interestingly, neither of them is painted with the blue pigment that would have embodied the preciousness of those materials, the pigment we know as Maya blue, called *texotli* by the Nahua painters of the Florentine Codex. Maya blue is used in the Florentine Codex extensively to symbolize all that is beautiful and precious; the painters are able to differentiate this turquoise blue from all other blues, attaching a precise meaning to the turquoise tonality as precious (fig. 10.3).[36] Why was the royal cape and turquoise shield of Paynal painted gray instead of Maya blue in Book 1? The painters used a grayish blue instead of Maya blue to represent the different "energetic" quality of Paynal's power. In this image his cape has lost its luster, its brilliance, ultimately its solar energy and character.

In his study of the production of yarn paintings in Huichol art in Mexico today, Johannes Neurath comments that the famous author Juan Ríos Martínez "suffered the wrath of the gods depicted in his paintings" because "the characters that according to the logic of Western art were simply represented in the works of yarn, do not stop 'being gods.'" The images in Huichol art, he says, "are powerful beings and thus need to be worshipped." In fact, Juan Ríos Martínez decided not to create any more of what he considered "high art." Instead he concentrated on simple formulas that could be sold as handicrafts to tourists because the latter do not have the power of vision embodied by his great works.[37] The phenomenon experienced by Ríos Martínez may explain the subdued colors used to paint the gods of the Aztec pantheon in Book I of the

FIGURE 10.3. *Maya blue pigment in an illustration of Moctezuma. Florentine Codex, Bk. 8, fol. 2v. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Med. Palat. 218–220. Courtesy of* MIBACT.

FIGURE 10.4. *Band of flowers. Florentine Codex, Bk. 1, fol. 4. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Med. Palat. 218–220. Courtesy of* MIBACT.

Florentine Codex. The *tlacuiloque* did not want to create the powerful images of the past. In the sixteenth century they could no longer revere them as they used to; that is why they did not paint the gods in their original powerful colors, particularly with Maya blue. Paynal, like the other gods featured in Book 1, as a sixteenth-century Nahua-Christian representation, has acquired a new powerful attribute: the alphabetic writing of the glosses.

The last important characteristic of Book 1 on which I want to focus, which is also valid for Book 2, is the constant presence of flower bands in the beginning and end of each chapter (fig. 10.4). Of the fifty-four folios that describe the gods in Book 1, only fourteen have figurative vignettes; the remaining folios have floral branches replacing the images. That is to say, only one quarter of the entire book presents drawings of the gods in the chapters that explain their attributes. Flower bands replace the descriptive images in the rest of the book. Are these flowers merely ornamental or do they bear meaning?

In Nahua culture and language, flowers signify preciousness, among many other things; in Book 1 they represent the precious, powerful words of ritual discourse, or *tlahtolli*. As mentioned before, for the shamanic tradition of the Tzeltal, the sacred words pronounced in the chants by the shamans are seen as flowers that unfold and open; sacred, powerful words are said to have a distinct aroma, just as real flowers do when they open. Also, according to Berenice Alcántara Rojas, flowers possess the energy of the deities, their *tonalli*, or characteristic "solar heat."[38] In the *Cantares mexicanos*, the most complete work of Nahua songs and ritual, flowers are mentioned as the jewels of the otherworld; flowers come from "inside the mountains," and they are described as "worthy, scented, fragrant, dressed in dew with the glow of the rainbow."[39] Thus flowers come from the "other side," to use Pitarch's terms, and their colors and scents are intrinsic to their otherworldly power. As León-Portilla has argued, the term *in cuicatl in xochitl*, "the song, the flower," is used in Nahua thought to express what is considered "truthful on earth," what is worthy.[40]

I think that the borders of flowers in Books 1 and 2 represent the worthiness and truthfulness of what is expressed in the written texts; thus they are there to qualify those words about the ancient gods as *tlahtolli*, like the *in cuicatl in xochitl* of Nahua song. The flowers are in fact a substitute image of the deities; they are their essence, they are the *tonalli* of the gods.

BOOK 2, THE CALENDARS, HOLIDAYS, AND CEREMONIES

Book 2 presents the rituals practiced during each of the eighteen *veintenas* (twenty-day Nahua months), which is how the solar year, called *xiuhpohualli*, was divided. Each *veintena*, or *metztli*, had particular deities who were

FIGURE 10.5. *The festival of Tlacaxipehualiztli. Florentine Codex, Bk. 2, fol. 73v. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Med. Palat. 218–220. Courtesy of* MIBACT.

honored through such ritual practices as sacrifices, dances, food offerings, and pilgrimages. How themes were represented in this book likely required special attention because many of the practices described, in particular human sacrifice in its many variants, were considered inhuman, savage, and inconceivable by Europeans. However, for the Nahua, human sacrifice was a fundamental part of their ceremonial and communal life. It should be noted that not all the festivities are illustrated, and those that are painted seem to follow the same ritual process in their making, emphasizing the transformative power of sacrifice and the ability of representations to capture this power.

The paintings in the second and fifth *veintenas*, Tlacaxipehualiztli and Toxcatl, respectively, are very significant. Several folios are dedicated to both, where the series of images take up the entire space of the Spanish column. Significantly, the order followed by the vignettes is different from the chronological order established in the texts. Both festivities begin with the most prominent image that captures the result of all the ritual actions, the apparition of a deity to whom the festival is dedicated, called the *ixiptla* (impersonator of the deity) in the Nahuatl text. The second festival, Tlacaxipehualiztli, is represented by a series of vignettes (figs. 10.5 and 10.6). The first two frames on folio 73v show the sacrifice of a captive: four men hold the limbs of the victim, and at the center a man appears to

FIGURE 10.6. *The festival of Tlacaxipehualiztli. Florentine Codex, Bk. 2, fol. 74r. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Med. Palat. 218–220. Courtesy of* MIBACT.

be skinning the captive; in the frame below, the executor wearing the sacrificial victim's skin presents himself as the *ixiptla* of the god Xipe Totec (Flayed God). Because he has been transformed into a god through the ritual process described in the first vignette, he is presented in full attire and in a frontal-facing position (see fig. 10.5, lower image). The following folio has three frames describing the festivities that took place during Tlacaxipehualiztli, before the sacrifice and skinning of the captive (see fig. 10.6), whereas the last two frames on folio 74v reiterate the coming to life of the *ixiptla*. Thus, the sequences of the images do not relate strictly to the chronological order of the text, but reiterate the significance of the *ixiptla*'s living embodiment of Xipe Totec, who begins and ends the ritual sequence.

The images of the fifth festivity, Toxcatl, follow a similar strategy. A vertical column of three framed images in folio 84v replaces the Spanish text in the left column (fig. 10.7). The first (upper) image in the series of paintings is the *ixiptla* of the god Tezcatlipoca (Smoking Mirror), who is forward facing, dressed in full regalia. This image is actually the culmination of a long and rigorous ritual process, a festival that according to the texts began a year earlier. In the next folio, the three vignettes illustrate this previous ritual process (fig. 10.8). First, we see a captive youth

FIGURE 10.7. *The festival of Toxcatl. Florentine Codex, Bk. 3, fol. 84v. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Med. Palat. 218–220. Courtesy of MIBACT.*

leaving the house where he was kept for a year. The following (middle) frame shows the young man playing the flute in the streets. This same flute will be ritually broken in the Templo Mayor before the captive's sacrifice (as shown in the third or lowest frame of the previous vignette in folio 84v). The third frame shows the participants attending to the *ixiptla* of Tezcatlipoca. The *ixiptla* of the god is the first and last representation of the series of framed paintings. In the two mentioned *veintenas*, Tlacaxipehualiztli and Toxcatl, images and text relate to each other, but the syntax of ritual dictates the manner in which images are presented, whereas the texts follow a linear narrative order. That is, the paintings of the *veintenas* actually serve a ritual purpose while also being illustrations. In other words, the images elaborate on the text and do not merely complement it. This example suggests that the painters were preserving aspects of their own pictographic traditions in spite of the strong European, Christian influences on their work.

Probably the best example of how the *tlacuiloque* created images according to notions and traditions that have nothing to do with concepts of Western representation is the image of the festivity of Panquetzaliztli (fig. 10.9). During this festival young people from different neighbor-

FIGURE 10.8. *The festival of Toxcatl. Florentine Codex, Bk. 3, fol. 85r. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Med. Palat. 218–220. Courtesy of* MIBACT.

hoods, or *calpolli*, fought in a skirmish or allegorical battle with young warriors who were trained at the *calmecac*, the official state school. It is also said that on the fourth day of the festival slaves who had been ritually sacrificed would appear on the earth while the mock battle was taking place. The sequence of paintings illustrating this ritual is very particular. In the first frame we see two youths facing each other and a larger man in the middle who has tangled hair and a heart hanging from his neck. These youths dressed in cotton capes represent the groups that fought each other, the youths of the *calpolli* and the ones of the *calmecac*. They can be seen fighting with wooden sticks in the frame below. Again, the sacrificial victim, transformed into the *ixiptla* of a powerful being, appears in the first frame. In addition to being depicted facing forward, the *ixiptla* is larger in size than the youth, reinforcing its supernatural character. If we look attentively at this image we discover that it was drawn by a group of three different artists and that each one painted one of the figures. The young warrior on the left was crafted with a small head, straight hair, and a small nose. In contrast, the warrior on the right has a large head and a prominent nose. In my work identifying the artists of the Florentine Codex, I managed to determine that the distinct features seen here are the work of three different artists.[41]

The fact that different artists painted the figures is an

FIGURE 10.9. *The festival of Panquetzaliztli. Florentine Codex, Bk. 2, fol. 143v. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Med. Palat. 218–220. Courtesy of* MIBACT.

act that gives each figure a sense of individuality. This dual authorship suggests that the act of painting them was part of the ritual itself, for each figure represents a different contingent, the *calpolli* people and the *calmecac* youths. Another artist who also worked on Books 2 and 4, to whom I refer as "the painter of complex skin colors," painted the captive-*ixiptla* who appears facing forward.[42] His style is similar to European engravings, as he uses shading to create the illusion of volume. The painter used an intense pink hue to color the skin of the sacrificial victim, and thus differentiates him from the two young contending warriors created by the other two artists.

Book 2 uses visual strategies that might have remained hidden to any observer outside the indigenous tradition of painting. These strategies follow a ritual logic that not only conveys the sacredness of the appearance of the *ixiptla* in the festivities but also signifies that the paintings continued to be imbued with a ritual reality. The *ixiptla* are presented frontally, they are greater in size than humans, and they are always at the beginning and the end of a series of images, the alpha and the omega, as the creator gods of the Aztecs. These *ixiptla* can be compared to one of the greatest *ixiptla* of all time, who was at the beginning and the end of life: Coatlicue, the mother of creation. All of the *ixiptla* represent the culmination of a complex and long ritual, and all of them are an expression of a moment in

time when the actions of sacrifice summon the powerful "other" that creates and destroys life. Coatlicue and the *ixiptla* in Book 2 of the Florentine Codex were made in accordance with a ritual and artistic tradition that reveals images as powerful because they unfold in their making a ritual world and its actions.

We should continue to investigate the power of writing and painting as indigenous arts related to ritual. In the Florentine Codex, as I have shown, alphabetic texts contain the power of the other, the European, whereas images possess the power of the otherworld where deities live. Together they form the unique world that the Nahua artist-writers were able to evoke—or rather to unfold—before our very eyes.

NOTES

1. The three-volume facsimile: Sahagún 1979; and a twelve-volume English translation of the Nahuatl: Sahagún 1950–1982.
2. Burkhart 1996, 55.
3. Sahagún, 1950–1982, introductory vol., prologue to Bk. 2, 55.
4. Magaloni Kerpel 2011b, 47–76.
5. Boone 2000; Stuart 1988, 1–25.
6. Molina lists *huehuetlahtolli* as "[v]euetlatolli. historia antigua, o dichos de viejos" (Molina 1992, fol. 157, 2nd num.). See also Peterson, chapter 11 of this volume.
7. Magaloni Kerpel 2014, 16–18.
8. Molina 1992, fol. 95v (2nd num.). Molina records this word as "[t]eixiptla. imagen de alguno, sustituto, o delegado." He also gives "[t]laixiptlayotl. imagen pintada [painted image]" on fol. 122v.
9. Elsewhere I have discussed the possibility of applying the concept of *ixiptla* to the paintings in the Florentine Codex, based on the ideas of the following authors (see Magaloni Kerpel 2014). First, the *Anales de Juan Bautista*, a collective book by indigenous painters (1564–1569), records the sacred images of the Virgin, Jesus, and the saints in oil paintings, cornstalk sculpture, silver bas-relief, and mural painting as *ixiptlatzin*, in which the suffix *-tzin* is reverential (see Reyes García, 2001, 150, 296, 300). Arild Hvidtfeldt (1958, 80–89) considers the *ixiptla* as the living presence of the gods and extends the concept to plants and objects. Alfredo López Austin (1973, 118–121) analyzes *ixiptla* as "a wrapping, clothing, or envelope" infused with sacred, creative heat. In his view, the key of this concept is the morpheme *-xip*, which is derived from *xipehua*, "to flay," "to peel the skin," thus indexing skin as a powerful, symbolic envelope. Serge Gruzinski (2001, 50–51) reflects on the differences between the Western concept of "image" and that of *ixiptla*, stressing that the Nahua notion of representation did not trace the reality of the senses but referred to the envelope, the skin enclosing a divine force. Finally, Salvador Reyes Equiguas (2006, 89–91) posits that *ixiptla* were always the product of human creation: sculptures in stone, wood, and edible dough or live slaves wearing costume. He specifically states that they could be paintings on hide, paper, or stucco, any human creation that would have "eyes" and "mouth" to become alive.
10. See Guilhem Olivier's discussion on Nahua deities in chapter 7 of this volume.
11. Monaghan, 1994, 87–100.
12. Boone 2000, 20.
13. León-Portilla, 1980, 58–60; Gruzinski 1982, 15.
14. Monaghan, 1994, 86–89; King 1994, 101–103.
15. King 1994, 106.
16. Lockhart 1992, 578–580; Tomilson 2015, 261–268; León-Portilla 2011, 269–280, 286–288.
17. Pitarch 2013b, 13–27.
18. Pitarch 2013a, 42–46.
19. See Magaloni Kerpel 2014, 9–13.
20. León-Portilla and Shorris 2001, 25–31; Monaghan 1994, 87–100; King 1994, 209–217.
21. León-Portilla 2001, 64–65.
22. King 1994, 217.
23. Pedro Pitarch, Postgraduate Course in Mesoamerican Studies (UNAM, August 27, 2013); and Pitarch, 2013b, 14.
24. Tomilson 2015, 261.
25. León-Portilla 2001, 260–261, 267; Sahagún 1950–1982, Bk. 10, 25.
26. Bierhorst 2009, 148–149. For an alternative translation of this ballad, see León-Portilla and Shorris 2001, 148.
27. The myths of creation for the Nahua people of central México are recorded in prose in the *Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas*, the *Histoyre due Mechique*, the Codex Chimalpopoca, and the Florentine Codex, among the most important sources. Painted images with glosses are preserved in some books: Codex Vaticanus A or 3738, Codex Telleriano-Remensis, and Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca. For the Maya myths of creation the most important source is the Popol Vuh, but the Books of Chilam Balam are also important sources.
28. Magaloni Kerpel 2014, 19–26.
29. Russo 2015, 26.
30. Russo 2015, 34–52.
31. In the Codex Borgia (Diaz and Rogers 1993, 62–69).
32. Baglioni et al. 2011, 79–105; Magaloni Kerpel 2011b, 47–76.
33. This same example is presented in Magaloni Kerpel 2014.
34. Sahagún 1950–1982, Bk. 1, fols. 2–3.
35. Sahagún 1950–1982, Bk. 1, fol. 3.
36. Magaloni Kerpel 2014, 40–46.
37. Neurath 2010, 104–105.
38. Alcántara Rojas 2011, 107–132.
39. Taube 2004, 69–97; León-Portilla 2011, 2:17.
40. León-Portilla 2001, 143.
41. Magaloni Kerpel 2014, 46–58.
42. Magaloni Kerpel 2011b, 57.