If Sankar Muthu’s foundational book is any indication, scholars of European imperialism are becoming increasingly aware of the complexity and variation of Enlightenment attitudes towards New World peoples. In Enlightenment Against Empire (2003), Muthu shows how, contrary to common assumptions, not all European thinkers of the eighteenth century participated in the pseudo-scientific derision or “dehumanizing exoticism” of indigenous Americans thought to be constitutive of Enlightenment discourse (12). Focusing on the writings of several major figures of European philosophy such as Diderot and Kant, Muthu argues that these authors resolutely rejected depictions of Amerindians as “natural” or “primitive” beings, arguing instead that such figures were rational beings that were culturally commensurate with Europeans.¹

Muthu’s study does much to shed light on progressive eighteenth-century strains of thought regarding Amerindian populations. However, a question that emerges in his work, and indeed in numerous other prevalent studies of Enlightenment views of New World peoples, is how opinions of America’s other populations — particularly creoles — may have also evolved during the “age of reason.”² As with indigenous populations, many

¹ Muthu does not mention Spanish contributions to eighteenth-century thought on New World peoples, even though writers such as Benito Jerónimo Feijoo wrote extensively on Amerindians, defending them as rational beings.

² For example, G.S. Rousseau’s and Roy Porter’s edited volume Exoticism in the Enlightenment, which includes a panorama of informative essays on European perceptions of non-Europeans in eighteenth-century thought, does not address creole populations. Henry Vyverberg’s Human Nature, Cultural Diversity, and the French Enlightenment, a good general study of philosophes thinking on cultural and national differences, similarly does not discuss creoles. In Hispanic research, other than Tudisco’s article written almost six decades ago, there is a dearth of published material on Enlightenment views of American populations in general. Mark Malin’s excellent recent study on the noble savage theme in late eighteenth-century Spanish fiction is a notable exception.
prominent Enlightenment thinkers, guided by environmental determinism theories, believed that Europeans living in America were genetically, behaviorally and intellectually inferior to their metropolitan counterparts. In this paper, I suggest that Spanish Enlightenment literature not only refuted such beliefs, but in fact may have even posited the opposite by showing characters from America as vehicles of enlightenment.

While excellent studies exist on the identity of creole populations in the early Atlantic world (Pagden, Bauer and Mazzotti), there is a scarcity of research on Enlightenment literary representations of the descendants of Europeans, especially when compared to the abundant critical interest in literary depictions of the Amerindian “noble savage” (Malin 145).

The Spanish Enlightenment provides a unique window into eighteenth-century views on New World peoples. In contrast with other European empires, Spain’s history of contact and exchange between New World and Old would give Spanish eighteenth-century writers a heightened familiarity with America’s inhabitants —especially the descendents of Europeans, who were regular visitors in Spanish ports and towns. By the eighteenth century, Spanish American criollos would form a prominent part of Spain’s cultural landscape; writers such as Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Carlos Sigüenza y Góngora, and Pedro Peralta de Barruevo had become well-known figures in many peninsular literary circles. One of the more common ways in which the familiarity with Spanish Americans fostered by Spain’s long imperial history would manifest itself in Spain would be

3 Some of the more famous accounts of creole inferiority are found in the writings of Dutch geographer Cornelius De Pauw, French naturalist Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, and Scottish historian William Roberston, whom I discuss below. Other notable Enlightenment figures, including Montesquieu, Raynal, and Voltaire, were also proponents of such ideas (Bauer and Mazzotti 6).

4 In addition to the noun “enlightenment” I will be using the adjective “enlightened” throughout this essay in conjunction with the figure of the American. By “enlightenment”/”enlightened” I am referring to the desire to reform antiquated social structures, institutions, and cultural practices, usually through an appeal to reason and/or what is “natural.”

5 An idea of the volume of human traffic between Spain and America leading up to the eighteenth century can be gleaned from the Catálogo de pasajeros a Indias (1995; 11 vols) at the Archivo de Indias in Seville. The catalog documents passengers applying for permission to travel to America. Each name is followed by the desired destination, as well as the marker “de Donde vino,” to indicate if the passenger is of American origin. Another source that records the presence of Spanish Americans in early modern Spanish society is the Expedientes de Caballeros de Origen Americano (reprinted 1994), also at the Archivo. The book keeps track of American-born solicitors and members of Spain’s knight orders from the 16th-20th centuries.
through representations of the *indiano* in literary works, especially theatre. Representations of these characters recorded some of the earliest European meditations on how returning traffic from the colonies would affect the imperial core.

My case study is a canonical text from the Spanish eighteenth century, Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos’s lachrymose comedy *El delincuente honrado* (1773). The work features a portrayal of a character from America bringing reform-minded attitudes to peninsular Spain. On an extra-textual level, it is also linked to the figure of the American: it emerged from within literary tertulias arranged by Pablo de Olavide (1725-1803), the Peruvian-born administrator who dedicated his career to modernizing Spanish institutions. In light of these considerations, I attempt to relate the play to emergent thinking about *criollo* intelligence, as well as with previous Golden Age and Baroque depictions of the *indiano*, which tended to corroborate negative perceptions of American-born Spaniards by portraying them as exotic, shallow or materialistic. In my concluding remarks, I discuss how the work’s praise of the American serves as a further reminder of the unique contours of Enlightenment in Spain.

Before turning to the text, a short review of a few of the more prominent writings on creoles leading into the eighteenth century will be helpful. The belief that Europeans who lived in America degenerated dates back to the first years of the Spanish conquest, in the rudimentary theories of climactic influence forwarded by many of the early chroniclers. The purportedly inhospitable air and poor soil of the American climate, it was believed, eroded the mental capacities of its inhabitants, Europeans and Indians alike, rendering them ungovernable, morally weak, and prone to vice. Franciscan Friar and ethnographer Bernardino de Sahagún delivered a famous early account of creole degeneracy in his *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*, composed between 1558-1577. Sahagún observed that Europeans, whether born in or transplanted to the Americas, quickly acquired the supposed defects of the native peoples. Sahagún even suggested that the descendants of Europeans were less able to adapt to the harshness of the American climate than indigenous groups; while the Indians at least “supieron dar remedio a los daños que en esta tierra imprime en los que en ella viven,” European transplants were going “al agua abajo” with their “malas inclinaciones” (82).

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6 I treat the words *indiano* and *criollo* as virtual synonyms in this essay since, as it will become evident, *indiano* was used indiscriminately by peninsular authors as a general term describing Spanish Americans, without attention to birthplace (Villarino 228). It was widely believed that all Spaniards who lived in America were promptly transformed; Sahagún’s account, for example, noted that even natural-born Spaniards “a pocos años andados de su llegada a esta tierra se hacen otros” (82).
Eighteenth-century science and natural history writers generally tried to discredit what they perceived as the exoticizing and exaggerated accounts of the early chroniclers, as Cañizares-Esguerra has shown. Yet, where creole populations were concerned, thinkers of the Enlightenment readily accepted and confirmed previous theories, developing them even further. Dutch philosopher and geographer Cornelius De Pauw, revisiting the climactic determination hypothesis in 1768, asserted that “[t]he Europeans who pass into America degenerate” due to the “vitiated qualities of the air” and the “noxious vapours from standing waters and uncultivated grounds” (17-18). The Comte de Buffon, in his Histoire naturelle (1749-1788), similarly insisted that American lands tended to produce weaker life forms. Scottish historian William Robertson wrote in 1777 that New World climates and soils sealed the fate of Americans of any ancestry to “remain uncivilized” (quoted in Bauer and Mazzotti, 6). To the view that creoles were biologically inferior, eighteenth-century thinkers added the opinion that such populations were also devoid of culture and could never hope to develop it. De Pauw asserted that “[c]reoles, descending from Europeans and born in America, though educated in the universities of Mexico, of Lima, and el Colegio de Santa Fé, have never produced a single book” (17); in Spain, Manuel Martí, dean of the Alicante cathedral, had declared México to be a place without books, “a country covered in the darkest mists of ignorance, home of the most barbarous people that have ever existed” (quoted in Pagden 87). The criollo writer struggled against a European audience “ever ready to dismiss his efforts as those of an ignorant backwoodsman” (Pagden 72).

Benito Jerónimo Feijoo’s 1730 essay “Españoles americanos” from his Teatro crítico universal constitutes one of the first major attempts to refute notions of creole inferiority. Written a half-century before Thomas Jefferson’s better-known defense of North American creole populations in Notes on the State of Virginia (1785), Feijoo’s essay rejected popular perceptions about Spanish criollo intellect and exalted the ability of the criollo to contribute to enlightened culture. In his essay Feijoo appealed to direct experience with criollos, as well as Spain’s long imperial reign, to cement his claims. Responding to De Pauw’s assertion that creole mental faculties

7 “Culture,” in the eighteenth century sense, was still largely understood in the singular, as a universal state of intellectual lucidity tied to science and reason —a “progressive, cumulative, distinctly human achievement” (Kuper 5).

8 That direct contact with the peoples of America could indeed sway popular perceptions is observable in the careers of several Golden Age authors. Lope de Vega’s attitudes about indios, notes one critic, changed resolutely once he moved to Seville, where he would work as a secretary for a prominent count from America as well as read works by American authors: “Debido a todos esos contactos
decayed prematurely, Feijoo maintained that life in the Spanish capital proved otherwise, as intelligent criollos were a common part of the cityscape for centuries: “se ven y han visto siempre desde casi dos siglos a esta parte, Criollos que han mantenido cabal el juicio” (110). Feijoo asserted that criollos comprised a visible and important part of the “hombres eruditos que ha tenido nuestra España de dos siglos a esta parte” (120).9 Feijoo’s essay attempted to show that Spaniards of the American continent were capable of producing - and indeed had already produced - eminent contributions to European culture, as figures such as Inca Garcilaso, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Carlos Sigüenza y Góngora, and Pedro Peralta de Barnuevo readily proved. However, he also went beyond simply positing the criollo as a cultural equal by suggesting that criollo work ethic and American education systems had surpassed their Spanish counterparts. Whereas children in Spanish schools succumbed to the “viciosa fecundidad de las pasiones” (120), criollo children were instilled with a superior “comprensión” and “agilidad intelectual” because of the high priority given to education in criollo society and the active regimens instilled by criollo parents: “este adelantamiento se debe únicamente al mayor cuidado que hay en su instrucción, y mayor trabajo a que los obligan” (124). Feijoo’s praise of criollo initiative would even contain the suggestion that the reform of Spanish educational practices in Enlightenment Spain should take a cue from Americans. Commenting on the criollo custom of schooling children beginning at six years of age, he would remark that “Si en España se practicara el mismo método, es de creer que a los veinte años se verían por acá Doctores graduados in utroque, como en América” (120).

Pablo de Olavide’s emergence in the cabinet of Charles III (1759-1788) in the second half of the eighteenth century brought to Spanish society a visible example not just of a cultured criollo, but one who was capable of helping implement enlightened reforms in Europe. Olavide fled from his positivos con las Indias, durante esa época, la opinión negativa de los indígenas que hasta entonces había tenido Lope cambió” (Martínez Tolontino 87). The presence of American-born writers in the Spanish cultural field could similarly influence intellectual opinions. As early as 1605, when Inca Garcilaso’s La Florida was first published, Spain saw the circulation of a text written by a mixed-race, American-born mestizo in peninsular literary circles (Zamora 234). As Diana de Armas Wilson demonstrates in her book Cervantes, the Novel, and the New World, New World chroniclers such as Inca Garcilaso would have a profound influence on Cervantes and other Spanish Golden Age writers.

9 Feijoo’s examples include a famous mathematician and literato from Panama of an advanced age who still conserved a sharp intellect and sense of humor, as well as a criollo who continued to govern in Mexico with prudence and good judgment in old age, despite suffering from gout (111).
native Peru to Spain at age 24 after being accused of embezzling earthquake relief funds into the construction of a theater. In Spain he became one of Charles III's more important administrators, taking on extensive projects such as agrarian reform in Andalucía (Defourneaux 129), the restructuring of the university system in Seville, and the fascinating but short-lived demographic experiment of the planned settlement of the Sierra Morena mountains. Olavide’s dedication to transforming Spanish culture and institutions made him “el prototipo del rico, culto y emprendedor gentilhombre ilustrado” for Spanish society (Marchena 28). He garnered international fame as well, keeping company with Voltaire, Sedaine, Marivaux, and also Diderot, who wrote Olavide’s biography in 1782. Olavide’s influence in Spain’s literary scene is most known for his “gran período sevillano” (Barrera y Bolaños 32) in which he founded an acting school and headed the famous tertulia del Alcázar. In Seville Olavide’s tertulia became a locus of intellectual activity whose participants included canonical writers such as Jovellanos, Campomanes, Clavijo, Carrasco, Moratín, and Iriarte (Marchena 29).

Excellent biographical research exists on Olavide (Defourneaux, Aguilar Piñal, Marchena); however, very few critics have attempted to examine Spanish perceptions of Olavide and especially his stature as an eminent criollo within peninsular circles. The theme of a New World visitor bringing “enlightenment from America,” embodied by Olavide’s career in Spain, can be observed in several literary representations by authors who spent time in Olavide’s inner circle. One early example is José Clavijo y Fajardo’s journal El pensador matritense (1761-1767). Clavijo had befriended Olavide during the American’s years in Madrid at the fabled tertulia de San Sebastián, where he would meet writers such as José Cadalso, Tomás de Iriarte, and Juan Meléndez Valdés (Dowling 3). In the journal’s ninth pensamiento Clavijo wrote of a “Caballero Americano” arriving in the Spanish capital to assess the state of Spanish theatre. Clavijo’s traveler, while attending a play in Madrid, revisited the neoclassical critique of Spanish eighteenth-century drama by pointing out the play’s disregard of classical unity and alleged improper use of genre.10 The figure of the Spanish American-as-theatre-critic shares a clear parallel with Olavide, who himself had promoted adherence to the neoclassical rules of drama governing the comedia and the tragedia in his pursuit of social reform via the theatre: “yo pienso que lo que necesita la Nación son tragedias que la conmuevan y la instruyan, comedias que la diviertan y corrijan…Lo que únicamente se debe buscar es la utilidad de la Nación, que necesita de buenas piezas de todo

10 The caballero concludes that Spain “carece absolutamene de ideas relativas al Teatro,” asserting that “Naciones cultas…es…que siempre han distinguido la tragedia de la comedia” (8).
género” (quoted in Barrera and Bolaños 34). Clavijo’s use of the _americano_ also reflects the creative strategies often employed by late eighteenth-century Spanish reformers to carry out their tasks as social and cultural critics while avoiding the label of “afrancesado.” The figure of the Spanish American likely offered Clavijo a safer vantage point from which to highlight the purported deficiencies of Spanish plays and actors than the openly French-admiring stances of writers such as Nicolás Fernández de Moratín.

An even more suggestive nod to Olavide and the figure of the enlightened American is Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos’s well-known play _El delincuente honrado_ (1773), a work which emerged from discussions of Enlightenment legal thought, neoclassical aesthetics, and French theatrical trends in Olavide’s _tertulia_ during Jovellanos’s formative years in Seville.11 _Delincuente_, which was first performed at a private showing in Olavide’s own home (Dowling 13-14), famously highlights the inadequacy of Spain’s legal codes relating to the duel (Niemeier 49). A significant but commonly overlooked detail is the fact that the play’s voice of legal and moral authority, Don Justo, is an _indiano_ returning from a long period in America. The political commentary and formalistic innovations of _Delincuente_ have made it one of the most commented-upon eighteenth-century plays; an ample body of research exists on _Delincuente_, including detailed studies of its sentimentalism (McClelland, Sebold, Kosove, García Garrosa, Deacon, Álvarez Castro, et al), its sources (Fuentes), and its legal ideas (Cedeño, Niemeier). Yet, other than Russell P. Sebold, few have attempted to analyze the significance of the _indiano_ character at the core of the work’s plot and moral program. In light of Jovellanos’s association with Olavide, it may be possible to read the work’s portrayal of an _indiano_ not just as an allusion to the Peruvian but as a general enactment on stage of the debates surrounding criollos and _indianos_ and their potential to contribute to peninsular society.12

The plot of _Delincuente_ revolves around the figure of Don Justo de Lara, a former émigré to America who has since reestablished himself in Segovia in the capacity of town magistrate. To review the events, in the play’s opening moments, the audience learns that Torcuato, an estranged youth, has killed the Marquis de Montilla in a duel, after being provoked and mocked about his fatherless status; the _indiano_ Don Justo has been placed in

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11 Excellent research exists detailing Jovellanos’s intellectual growth under Olavide’s auspices in Seville; see Perdices de Blas, Deacon, and Dowling.

12 Alejandro Mejías-López has observed that even the apparently oxymoronic title of the work can be read as a subtle metaphorical reference to opposing views on _indianos_.
charge of the investigation. As Torcuato conceals his crime and deliberates over whether to flee to Madrid or stay in Segovia to face punishment, Don Justo and Don Simón — the town’s other corregidor and Torcuato’s father-in-law — pursue various leads while discussing the justness of the dueling decree. When Anselmo, an intimate friend of Torcuato, falsely confesses to be the murderer in an attempt to save his friend, Torcuato is compelled to reveal his secret, preferring to face a penalty of death rather than allow Anselmo to stand in his place. The play takes a critical turn when it is revealed that Don Justo is Torcuato’s absentee father. Eventually, as the primary legal advocate for Torcuato, Don Justo is able to gain a royal pardon, absolving Torcuato of the pena de muerte.

One of the few critics to underscore the significance of the indiano in Jovellanos’s work is Sebold, who has noted the parallels between El delincuente honrado and Ángel de Saavedra’s early nineteenth-century play Don Álvaro, o la fuerza del sino (1835), a work that would similarly incorporate the indiano protagonist in its critique of peninsular society. However, although his study reveals striking similarities between the two works, Sebold uses the comparison to stress the romantic tendencies of El delincuente honrado, whereby Torcuato, the son of an indiano, resembles Saavedra’s indiano protagonist, Don Álvaro, because both characters are “buenos salvajes…obligados a vivir al márgen de la sociedad conservadora” (59). By focusing on Torcuato as the play’s downtrodden lawbreaker and comparing him to Don Álvaro, Sebold stresses the marginality of the indiano and his incompatibility with peninsular society. Yet, in Jovellanos’s work, the role of Don Justo as what Sebold deems the “filósofo ilustrado de corazón noble” (66) contradicts an exclusively romantic interpretation of the indiano and invites a deeper inquiry into the character.

Genre continues to be one of the more widely discussed aspects of Delincuente, with much attention being paid to how best to label the play’s transitional style between neoclassicist and romantic aesthetics. Jovellanos himself used the term “tragicomedia” to refer to the hybrid composition of the work; other names — “drama sentimental” (Caso González 103), “comedia lacrimosa y drama romántico” (Sebold 57) “comedia sentimental” (Álvarez Castro 265), to mention a few — testify to the work’s range of stylistic and thematic influences. Beyond questions of classification, genre considerations in Delincuente also provide important insight into Jovellanos’s

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13 In his book Properties of Modernity, Michael Iarocci argues along similar lines with respect to the indiano protagonist of Duque de Rivas’s play (see chapter 3).

14 The fact that Torcuato is not a true indiano himself ultimately makes the comparison to Don Álvaro somewhat forced, even if we can agree that Delincuente may have been a reference for the Duque de Rivas’s play.
character profiles. The work’s inspirational models, the prose tragicomedy and the French comédie larmoyante, were characterized by a break with certain neoclassical conventions, particularly those related to character depth and interiority. The lachrymose comedy, as envisioned by Diderot, had aimed to correct classical tragedy’s sweeping monologues and alleged excessive focus on the psychological analysis of individuals (Sebold 79). Instead, the lachrymose comedy strove towards the more utilitarian goal of modeling sympathetic feeling and emphasizing human interconnectedness, with a decidedly moralizing content (García Garrosa 16). García Garrosa explains that sentimental comedy’s jettisoning of aristocratic themes and personages in favor of middle-class characters reflected part of a broader desire to “dar prioridad a la pintura de las ‘condiciones’ antes que a la de los ‘carácteres’” (García Garrosa 16). By paying “scant attention to the motivation of his characters” and presenting a plot conflict that “is not an inner moral one” (Polt 69), Jovellanos accentuates the social symbolism of his characters and encourages the viewer to consider the character’s “place” alongside his “personality.”

That Jovellanos wished to foreground the American provenance of Don Justo can be observed in the fact that he develops the events of Delincuente around the legend of the indiano and the social perceptions surrounding the figure. Don Justo’s emigration to America, and his subsequent orphaning of Torcuato, form the catalyst for the duel which sets the plot in motion: Torcuato confesses that it was the Marqué’s allusion to his fatherless status that ultimately provoked him to agree to duel and kill the Marqué (150). The reappearance of Don Justo in peninsular society, meanwhile, unleashes the chain of events that will lead to the reevaluation of the dueling decree and the ultimate royal pardon of Torcuato. This poetics of indiano ‘departure’ and ‘return’ that structures the work’s action allows Jovellanos to engage popular stereotypes of the indiano as an instigator of continental social disorder, discussed famously by Fernand Braudel in his writings of the “runaway husband” of Spanish imperial expansion.16 Torcuato’s self-description as a wandering man “sin hogar ni

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15 “The comedia lacrimosa portrays characters within the confines of familial, professional, and commercial relationships. These people are modified by the circumstances of their existence” (Kosove 37).

16 Braudel offered a sketch of runaway husbands and other indianos in his work The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, 1966 (from de Armas Wilson, 34), discussing how such a figure was often blamed for his role in Spain’s population decline and economic malaise.
patria” (115) and later “Sin patria, sin familia, prófugo y desconocido sobre la tierra” (120) seems to incriminate Don Justo for leaving Spanish society with yet another estranged orphan. Jovellanos, however, ultimately rejects the portrayal of Justo as an irresponsible runaway by presenting Don Justo’s flight to America as a burdensome necessity engendered by the social and economic conditions of Spain. Don Justo’s years in America are described as a “destierro” (152) rather than an irresponsible quest for riches or nobility; it was “la necesidad” that forced him to “buscar en países lejanos los medios de mantener honradamente a una familia” (151).

Jovellanos uses a strong contrast in Delincuente between Don Justo and the conservative magistrate Don Simón both to underscore the indiano as a bearer of enlightenment and to present him as an antidote to the retrograde thinking of peninsular society. Jovellanos had written in the play’s prologue that the purported “objeto de este drama” was the contrast of two legal visions (99). In his 1777 letter to the French cleric Ángel D’Eymar, Jovellanos emphasized that in Don Justo, he wished to create an eminently “enlightened” character — “ilustrado, virtuoso, y humano. Ilustrado, para que conociese los defectos de las leyes; virtuoso, para que supiera respetarlas, y humano, para que compadeciese en alto grado al inocente que veía oprimido bajo de su peso” (99, my italics). In Delincuente, Don Justo’s legal views are expressed through his questioning of the adequacy of the 1757 dueling decree that held the retado and the retador equally culpable under the law, thereby condemning Torcuato to death. Against the decree, Don Justo argues that laws should reflect an “espíritu” of a nation (118) and that their nature must be discussed in accordance with context and individuals. Such ideas link Jovellanos’s protagonist to the strand of Enlightenment legal thinking associated with Montesquieu and Beccaria (Polt, Cedeño, Niemeier). Don Simón, meanwhile, is portrayed as a stubborn scholastic through his insistence that the law be “basada en la letra, más que en el espíritu” (Cedeño 280). Simón calls Justo’s desire for reform of the dueling laws a “disparate” (118) and dismisses his opinions as vain “filosofías” (129). Jovellanos’s own Black Legend-like description of Don Simón in his letters to D’Eymar paints Simón as the epitome of a superstitious and ignorant Spanish society imbued in a reflexive reverence to tradition: “Don Simón es todo lo contrario. Esclavo de las preocupaciones comunes, y dotado de una instrucción limitados, aprueba sin conocimiento cuanto disponen las leyes, y reprueba sin examen cuanto es contrario a ella” (99).

17 Don Simón relates to Torcuato his conversation with Don Justo: “¿Querrás creerme que hablando la otra noche Don Justo de la muerte de mi yerno, se dejó decir que nuestra legislación necesitaba de reforma, y que era una cosa muy cruel castigar con la misma pena al que admite un desafío que al que le provoca?” (118).
Jovellanos’s portrayal of Don Justo as an assiduous worker further exalts the enlightened character of his indiano protagonist and the exemplary image he projects. Strong work ethic formed part of the eighteenth-century Spanish ideal of the hombre de bien; as Pablo F. Luna has recently shown, Jovellanos himself possessed a “noción dinámica del trabajo” which constituted a key part of his vision for a virtuous and prosperous society (500). As noted previously, work ethic was also a central component of Feijoo’s thesis on the superiority of the American criollo in Teatro crítico universal. Not surprisingly, the first mention of Justo in Delincuente is a reference to his tireless commitment to his profession. In the play’s third scene, Torcuato narrates Justo’s quick progress in the persecution of a servant believed to be involved in the death of the Marqués:

Desde que de orden del Rey vino a continuar la causa el alcalde Don Justo de Lara, es infinito lo que se ha adelantado. Aún no ha seis días que está en Segovia, y quizá sabe ya todos los lances que precedieron al desafío. Él tomó por sí mismo informes y noticias, examinó testigos, practicó diligencias, y procediendo siempre con actividad y sin estrépito, logró descubrir el paradero de Juanillo, despachó posta a Madrid, y le hizo conducir arrestado. (112)

Jovellanos once again contrasts Justo’s behavior with entrenched peninsular attitudes by having Don Simón repeatedly express astonishment regarding Don Justo’s work ethic. Don Simón nervously describes Justo as “activo como un diablo” (120) and remarks with unease that “Los hombres de empleo no sosiegan un instante” (137); he later complains that Justo “con el bocado en la boca vuelve a su trabajo” (138). This contrast in attitudes towards work is further underscored in each of the two magistrates’ treatment of the working class. While Don Justo shows compassion for his servant Don Claudio by insisting that he enjoy a reasonable lunch break, Simón is suspicious of the intentions of society’s lower orders: “Este bribón querrá trabajar poco, y que la comisión dure mucho…Sí, a mí con esas” (130).

Jovellanos’s portrait of Don Justo in Delincuente enacts a shift from previous depictions of the indiano in Golden Age and Baroque theatre. A range of attitudes towards indianos in Golden Age and Baroque works existed, as Reichenberger has shown, but in general authors tended to include indianos amongst the “grupos marginales” (Moux 37) of Spanish

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18 Examples of such depictions can be found in plays by Lope de Vega, who compiled some forty works during his career featuring such characters, including an eponymous entremés (Villarino, Martínez Tolentino), Juan Ruiz de Alarcón (an indiano himself), Tirso de Molina, and Pedro Calderón de la Barca, who also wrote plays featuring indianos as characters (Reichenberger).
society, stressing their exotic element. Even some later eighteenth-century texts would continue to associate the indiano with money, greed, and other unfavorable traits. José Cadalso’s Cartas marruecas (1774, 1789), for example, paints the indiano as a shallow-minded spendthrift driven by “ambición y codicia” (214). Delincuente attempts to absolve the indiano and his legacy by ultimately downplaying his differences and emphasizing both his compatibility with and advantageousness to Spain. Don Justo’s ultimate discovery that he is Torcuato’s father can be seen as a metaphorical extension of this idea. The theme of concealed parentesco, a common topos of late eighteenth-century sentimental drama, served an important strategic function within the lachrymose comedy’s didactic program. Plots built around the revelation of previously unknown family connections aimed to produce emotion in the spectator and emphasize the social cohesion flowing from common genetic heritage. In Delincuente, the use of the sentimental conventions of parentesco in a work involving the indiano and his offspring Torcuato reiterates the character’s familial bond with peninsular society and reflects the overall optimistic vision the work projects regarding the reincorporation of the Spanish American into Spanish social and cultural life. Though Torcuato is forced to leave Segovia as a condition of his pardon at the work’s conclusion, the text’s repeated insistence upon his innocence—“la inocencia brillaba en su semblante” (144); “tu inocencia, tus virtudes” (164); “mi inocente esposo” (165); “sangre del inocente” (166)—ultimately exonerates both the father and the offspring while suggesting them as models of enlightened virtue.

19 A sampling of the large body of scholarship on indianos in Spanish Golden Age and Baroque literatures reveals the panorama of connotations associated with the figure, most of which are negative. Martínez Tolontino remarks that indianos were “el hazmerreír de la sociedad española” (84); Moux notes that the indiano was commonly depicted as “inculto, simple, proveniente de las capas sociales más humildes… engañado con suma facilidad” (37); for Reichenberger, indianos were often portrayed as “ardorosos amantes, fiesteros, enamoradizos” (97); Simerka’s essay argues that indianos were treated as “liminal figures… Spaniards, by blood, but dangerous Others, by virtue of their experiences” (312). As frequently misunderstood outcasts, indianos could also be markers of the unknown or the uncertain. Anita Stoll affirms that in Golden Age theatre, “indiano characters serve[d] as stock characters who incarnate the debate concerning the uncertain nature of noble status” (quoted in Simerka, 313); for Villarino the indiano functioned as the mysterious “elemento intrigante” who produced psychological reactions amongst the actors and spectators (228).

20 The theme of indiano “innocence” in the play once again may have an immediate historical referent in the figure of Olavide, who faced several legal battles during his career in Spain. In an early embezzlement trial the Spanish government wished to make his punishment a public example of “los vicios de Indias” (Marchena 25);
In addition to serving as a subtle corrective to historical perceptions of New World peoples, Jovellanos’s portrayal of enlightened attitudes arriving to Spain through American channels invites us once again to consider the singular characteristics of the Enlightenment in Spain. As is well known, the Spanish Enlightenment has often been accused of being “insufficient” (Subirats) for its lack of canonical contributions to eighteenth-century thought, a phenomenon attributed to the purportedly stifling intellectual and cultural climate brought about by absolutist monarchy and inquisitorial fervor. Paradoxically, the comparatively slower pace and narrower scope of economic, social and cultural reform thought to be characteristic of the Spain’s oft-misunderstood eighteenth century may have in fact helped create conditions under which writers in Spain could view colonial populations as sources of renewal rather than subjects of empire. As I argued here, literary representations of late eighteenth-century criollos and indianos reinforce a portrait of eighteenth-century Spain in which a substantial meditation was carried out regarding the people of the Americas and their place within evolving cultural hierarchies and schemes. As legacies of Spain’s imperial experience, criollos and indianos invited many ilustrados to reevaluate the perceptions of such populations as well as theorize how they could help modernize peninsular culture and institutions. The proposal made by Spanish Enlightenment authors such as Clavijo and Jovellanos that flows of culture from the metropolis to the periphery were in some sense “reversible” also foreshadows the increased role that Latin America’s writers would play in the Spanish cultural climate more than a century later. In this way, the present study attempts to form a bridge to the work of contemporary scholars such as Alejandro Mejías-López. In his book The Inverted Conquest: The Myth of Modernity and the Transatlantic Onset of Modernism, Mejías-López documents the shift of cultural authority from Europe to Latin America at the turn of the twentieth century embodied by writers like Rubén Darío, while stressing the insufficiencies of contemporary postcolonial and modernity paradigms for analyzing colonial and postcolonial societies of Spanish America. This essay has suggested that the groundwork for such a shift may be observable in early attitudes towards criollos and indianos expressed by Enlightenment thinkers in Spain. Future scholars of Spanish Enlightenment literature, rather than focusing perhaps excessively on Eurocentric narratives as constitutive of European Enlightenment thought, might instead further explore eighteenth-century

famous 1776 trial and subsequent imprisonment for possessing banned books made him a legend around Europe.
representations of Americans as some of the first musings about the possibility of knowledge and culture developing outside of Europe.

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