

illustrations by the indigenous scribe Mateo de San Juan, allow us to sense how the Mexica received, taught, and enacted this powerful devotion.

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NARRATIVES ABOUT SIR FRANCIS DRAKE

Disputas de altamar. Sir Francis Drake en la polémica española-inglesa sobre las Indias. By María Gracia Ríos Taboada. Madrid/Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2021. Pp. 261. \$24.00 paper; \$24.00 e-book.
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This book is a unique contribution to a subject that has been widely studied from different historical perspectives. María Gracia Ríos Taboada presents an original approach to well-known facts, but now seen from another kind of evidence: Spanish and English literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The book reveals the effects of piracy in discussions about the legitimacy of the Spanish conquest of America. Francis Drake personified the colonialist rivalry between Spain and England; therefore, Spain attacked him as best it could in many different kinds of texts, including literary ones. On the British side, consciously or not, the colonialist project sought to counter the attacks by appropriating the arguments given by Spanish literature. Indeed, as the author demonstrates, both Spanish and English colonialist propaganda used similar images of Drake.

Drake carried out numerous and precise blows to Spanish interests, putting in jeopardy the Spanish colonial system by trying to establish “alliances” with the native populations and maroons (societies of escaped slaves); eliminating the natural, geographical protection of the Peruvian viceroyalty; and challenging Catholicism in the New World. That is to say, his actions provided more than sufficient reason to earn Spanish animosity and his portrayal in Spanish literature in very negative terms.

Despite the attacks, Drake acquired global dimensions as a sailor, pirate, corsair, explorer, discoverer, and conqueror. The sinuous and apparently chaotic path of the argumentation exposed in the literature has a logic that the author presents in a clear and very didactic way. He shows how the exaggerations of Spanish authors made Drake the Protestant hero of the seventeenth century, and then dedicates the other three parts of the book, respectively, to Drake’s portrayals in late sixteenth-century English literature as the champion of future British expansionism; the impact of Drake’s attacks on the American coasts in the evangelization of the Amerindians and its reflection in English literature; and the detailed study of Lope de Vega’s epic poem *La Dragontea*, which

attributes to Drake (the Draque Dragon) the same epithets that English literature used for Spanish conquerors, thanks to Father Bartolomé de las Casas.

The result is a great contribution to understanding the controversies over the American territories by the European powers, controversies based in the rhetoric displayed in the “possession controversies” (following Rolena Adorno), and “entangled histories” or “mutual influencing, reciprocal or asymmetric perceptions, and the intertwined processes of constituting one another” (according to Eliga H. Gould) (20).

In this way, the central objective of the book is to demonstrate, from multiple and antagonistic fronts, that the narratives about Drake constitute one of the most influential and encompassing topics in the writings about America in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Indeed, Drake is presented as a “corrected” version of the Spanish conqueror, a symbol of English success, and a “hero of the mercantile class.” This version of Drake made use of numerous Spanish texts that circulated in England in Spanish or were translated into English, with certain emphases, additions, and omissions (21, 27, 109, 115).

The author refers to several cases that reinforce the idea of the exchange of images between Spanish and English authors. Among the references are the censorship by Sarmiento de Gamboa of part of the epic poem *Elegías* by Juan de Castellanos (151–160) and the analyses of *Armas antárticas* by Juan de Miramontes Zuázola (160–162) and *La Dragontea* (1597). *La Dragontea* represents the English as greedy, cruel, impious, and inhuman toward indigenous people; these are precisely the same arguments that English propaganda put forward about the Spanish conquerors (172–75, 190, 219).

The author calls Drake a “pirate.” Although she sometimes uses “corsair” as a synonym in referring to other “pirates” (for example, on pages 23, 57, 101, and 106), this usage opens up a question about the term. The difference between a pirate and a corsair concerns the central theme of the book: Was Drake acting for himself or for the benefit of the kingdom he served—the kingdom that protected him? His actions evidence the so-called *patente de corso* (corsair license) from the very beginning of his career, not just from 1581 when he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth.

Finally, it is a very well-written book, easy and enjoyable to read, and suitable for discussions in seminars at all university levels. It offers a fruitful dialogue between literature and history.

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