

BROADER CANON,
INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES:
Recent Works in Colonial Latin American Literary Studies

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- BOOK OF THE FOURTH WORLD: READING THE NATIVE AMERICAS THROUGH THEIR LITERATURE.* By Gordon Brotherston. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Pp. 478. \$39.95 cloth.)
- LA LITERATURA NOVOHISPANA: REVISION, CRITICA Y PROPUESTAS METODOLOGICAS.* Edited by José Pascual Buxó and Arnulfo Herrera. (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico, 1994. Pp. 405.)
- CODED ENCOUNTERS: WRITING, GENDER, AND ETHNICITY IN COLONIAL LATIN AMERICA.* Edited by Francisco Cevallos-Candau, Jeffrey A. Cole, Nina M. Scott, and Nicomedes Suares-Arauz. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994. Pp. 298. \$45.00 cloth, \$15.95 paper.)
- CRITICA Y DESCOLONIZACION: EL SUJETO COLONIAL EN LA CULTURA LATINOAMERICANA.* Edited by Beatriz González Stephan and Lúcia Helena Costigan. (Caracas: Universidad de Simón Bolívar and Ohio State University, 1992. Pp. 669.)
- CASTAWAYS: THE NARRATIVE OF ALVAR NUÑEZ CABEZA DE VACA.* By Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, edited by Enrique Pupo-Walker, translated by Frances M. López-Morillas. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993. Pp. 158. \$30.00 cloth, \$12.00 paper.)
- PSALMODIA CHRISTIANA (CHRISTIAN PSALMODY).* By Bernardino de Sahagún, translated by Arthur J. O. Anderson. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993. Pp. 375. \$39.95 cloth.)
- BETWEEN TWO WATERS: NARRATIVES OF TRANSCULTURATION IN LATIN AMERICA.* By Silvia Spitta. (Houston, Tex.: Rice University Press, 1995. Pp. 246. \$37.50 cloth.)

Gone are the days when colonial Latin American literature was studied primarily as a series of *crónicas* that “men of action” (and mostly Spanish descent) wrote using contemporary literary constructs to portray the “indescribable” reality of a “New World.” (Perhaps the only consistently mentioned literary figure who did not fit this mold was Sor Juana

Inés de la Cruz.) The paradigmatic passage so frequently evoked as evidence—Bernal Díaz describing Tenochtitlán as an exotic city of the sort found in novels of chivalry—is no longer the only viable model for justifying literary studies of colonial texts. The binary approach, in situating history versus fiction and *crónicas* as precursors to the use of magical realism in the “boom novels,” has been firmly replaced in the course of the last two decades by a vital and diverse critical movement. The new scholarship is driven less by the need to justify these texts as literary and more by probing interdisciplinary studies that approach the colonial period as a dynamic political and cultural process with many voices.

Although historians like Lewis Hanke and Irving Leonard paved the way much earlier, the recent trend toward viewing colonial literature in these broader terms began to take shape in the early 1980s. Questioning the traditional notion that the chroniclers were writing “fiction,” literary scholars such as Roberto González Echevarría, Enrique Pupo-Walker, and Rolena Adorno examined the rhetorical constructs found in a variety of narrative forms from Europe, including legal documents, humanist histories, and sermons. Adorno studied Andean influences as well. Other critics, armed with relatively new theoretical methodologies, opened the field to increasingly interdisciplinary approaches. Particularly appealing were anthropological studies of “the Other” and Hayden White’s analysis of historical narrative as sharing rhetorical strategies with literature.¹

Recent colonial Latin American literary criticism is exploring theoretical and methodological issues that have captured the attention of a broad spectrum of humanists in the 1990s, such as questions about the canon and discourse analysis. In some cases, this trend has led to theorists writing about America without a solid grounding in the historical circumstances of the textual production they are analyzing (a criticism frequently aimed at Tzvetan Todorov and Stephan Greenblatt, for example). But on the whole, scholars are increasingly doing the footwork necessary to understand the context in which the works were produced and to value the texts in their own right as compelling accounts of conquest, colonization, transculturation, and resistance. A poststructuralist approach dominates as the text as well as the factors that made the text possible are examined.

Two recent historical commemorations in the field have further incited interest and a demand for new approaches. The polemical issues brought to the fore by the quincentenary of Columbus’s voyage to America jolted much literary criticism out of its previous unquestioningly Eurocentric stance and encouraged dialogue with recent studies in anthropology, folklore, sociology, history, and religious studies. A second com-

1. Hayden White, “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact,” *Tropics of Discourse* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 81–100.

memorative event, the three hundredth anniversary in 1995 of the death of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, fueled interest in exploring her cultural milieu and applying feminist criticism to her literary production. Set in motion a decade earlier by Octavio Paz's landmark book on Sor Juana (1982), the study of the Mexican nun and other convent writers has developed into a subfield of colonial literature.

In fact, the recuperation, translation, and publication of texts that had been lost or devalued as nonliterary characterize the current status of the field as much as the new theoretical and interdisciplinary readings. Often for the first time, scholars are studying works by previously marginalized indigenous, mestizo, and women writers. The definition of what is considered a literary text has radically changed, and the term *colonial discourse* has been adopted widely in order to include works that were traditionally categorized and dismissed as religious writings (such as sermons and confessional literature) or indigenous forms of representation (such as Mesoamerican codices). As a result, the canon continues to be drastically altered and expanded.²

Such an array of theoretical issues and works makes an overview of the critical activity in the field difficult. Because no single dominant literary movement, genre, or even cultural tradition characterizes the more than three hundred years of textual production under study, an essay on recent trends must necessarily delineate certain focal areas. I will center on three that are paradigmatic but do not exhaust the work being done: collections of essays spurred by conferences and general interest in 1992 and its aftermath (*Crítica y descolonización*, *Coded Encounters*, and *La literatura novohispana*); new translations into English of canonical and traditionally noncanonical texts (*Castaways* and *Psalmody Christiana*); and monographs that exemplify the broadening of the field through new interdisciplinary approaches and the examination of often marginalized representational forms or genres (*Between Two Waters* and *Book of the Fourth World*). Other areas have witnessed vital activity, but space does not allow examining them here: the publication of critical editions based on new archival research as well as monographs about traditional chroniclers (such as Margarita Zamora's *Writing in the Margins* and Anthony Pagden's *European Encounters*), rediscovered indigenous and convent writers (Rodger Zapata's *Guaman Poma*, Kathleen Ross's *The Baroque Narrative of Carlos Sigüenza y Góngora*), and previously dismissed baroque and eighteenth-century authors (Julie Johnson's *Satire in Colonial Spanish America*, Georgina Sabat-Rivers's work on baroque poets, and Karen Stolley's on Concolorcorvo).

2. Octavio Paz, *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, or the Traps of Faith*, translated by Margaret Sayers Peden (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).

Publications Inspired by the Quincentenary

The year 1992 and those immediately following it witnessed a proliferation of journals and books dedicated to reproducing essays from conferences and debates about the Columbian Quincentennial. Most grapple with how to study—and even to name—the complex polemical issues and textual production associated with 1492 and its aftermath. Most question traditional criticism, with varying degrees of success, and point readers in new directions that demonstrate the spectrum of approaches, subfields, and texts that are part of “colonial discourse.” Ranging from an impressively diverse chrestomathy to a carefully honed collection illustrating specific methodological foci, the three collections edited by Beatriz González Stephan and Lúcia Helena Costigan, by Francisco Javier Cevallos-Candau et al., and by José Pascual Buxó and Arnulfo Herrera offer a useful sampling of the types of collections recently published in the United States and Latin America.

The thirty-six contributors to *Crítica y descolonización: El sujeto colonial en la cultura latinoamericana* include many of the leading scholars in the field. The introduction by González and Costigan discusses the all-important question of perspective posed in 1992—who discovered whom? The volume also pleads urgently for considering new points of view, voices, and terminology. The issue of how to proceed is not addressed, however. The essays themselves suggest possibilities, but the only guidance provided is the generally chronological organization of the essays. Perhaps a synthesis or overview was deemed too difficult. The quantity and scope of the articles make the volume a valuable resource, but one whose focus is difficult to determine.

Crítica y descolonización includes two to six essays in each of the following categories: the chronicles, shipwreck and captivity narratives, baroque poetry and satire, writings by women, *criollo* historiography, texts with indigenous elements, Brazilian chronicles, and nineteenth- and twentieth-century works that echo colonial themes. The roster of contributors includes such well-known critics as Walter Mignolo, Sara Castro-Klarén, Mercedes López-Baralt, Maureen Ahern, Iris Zavala, John Beverly, Alfredo Roggiano, Julie Johnson, Mabel Moraña, Georgina Sabat-Rivers, Electa Arenal, Regina Harrison, Raquel Chang-Rodríguez, Beatriz González Stephan, and Karen Vogley. The list boasts many newer scholars in the field as well. A rather arbitrary sampling of the topics discussed will suggest its generous range: Walter Mignolo considers the coining of the term *colonial discourse* and its implications; Maureen Ahern offers a keen theoretical analysis of a borderlands chronicle; Francisco Javier Cevallos-Candau bases a reading of the *Araucana* on Renaissance poetic theory; Iris Zavala examines utopian thought and El Inca Garcilaso; Lúcia Helena Costigan studies a satirical Brazilian poem; and Carmen Bustillo carries

readers into the twentieth-century rewritings of colonial texts with an analysis of the works of Alejo Carpentier. *Críticas y descolonización*, although rather unwieldy in its scope and length (more than 650 pages), is also a rich source of materials and suggests the range of possibilities for study in the field.

By contrast, the editors of *Coded Encounters: Writing, Gender, and Ethnicity in Colonial Latin America* present a reflective introduction to the critical approaches and issues that define recent colonial Latin American literature. Francisco Cevallos-Candau, Jeffrey Cole, Nina Scott, and Nico-medes Soares-Arauz confine their selection of essays to five areas that they judge to be “most prominent in defining the field” (p. 4). This work resulted from a conference held in honor of one of the progenitors of colonial studies, Lewis Hanke, best known for his work on Bartolomé de las Casas. *Coded Encounters* demonstrates the vitality of ongoing investigations and the ways in which they have made scholars reconsider the field and often redefine the subjects studied.

The first area of inquiry involves the representation of the New World and the way knowledge of America altered Old World models. Grounded in current methodological approaches, the essays in this section examine the imposition of cultural codes by using a variety of materials, including nontraditional sources like maps (Mignolo and Ahern) and cultural uses of food (Luis Alves). The second section highlights how Spaniards and *criollos* questioned the institutionalization of the conquest by offering alternative views (Rolena Adorno) or by employing satire (Pedro Lasarte and Lúcia Helena Costigan). Part III treats Native American reactions to conquest and colonization in the form of armed resistance in Peru (Raquel Chang-Rodríguez) and cultural resistance and adaptation by Andeans in the confessional (Regina Harrison). The fourth section examines women in the mid-colonial period in general (Asunción Lavrin) and as examples of “code breakers,” such as the Monja Alférez and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (Stephanie Merrim, Nina Scott, and Antonio Carreño). Last, the quest for a *criollo* identity is taken up through the examination of satire, rewritings of chronicles, and novelistic production (Julie Johnson, Karen Stolley, and Antonio Benítez-Rojo). What distinguishes *Coded Encounters* and provides coherence is the clear delineation of methodological concerns found in each essay, supported by convincing readings of texts. This volume will broaden as well as deepen current discussion in the field of colonial Latin American literature and criticism.

José Pascual Buxó's and Arnulfo Herrera's *La literatura novohispana: Revisión, crítica y propuestas metodológicas* offers a still more focused collection of essays illuminating methodological issues and approaches to works published in colonial Mexico. Emerging out of a post-1992 symposium in which participants were invited to “revisar críticamente las aportaciones de quienes nos precedieron en este campo de estudios,” the

volume begins with an introduction by Buxó. He first traces the historiography of literary criticism dealing with New Spanish texts and points to key critics who changed the field in the past, such as Menéndez Plancarte and Octavio Paz. Buxó then asks, where do we go from here? The twenty-six essays respond. As with the two other collections, the studies included in *La literatura novohispana* cover an impressive range of material. Although no formal structure was specified, the volume generally groups essays together in the following categories: theatre, various religious works, Sor Juana's writings, art and iconography in literature, and methodological concerns in the field. The first three areas are of particular interest because they help broaden the canon by including a range of material previously excluded.

The last set of essays on the current state of colonial literary studies is the most innovative and compelling for the purposes of this review. Contributor Sergio López Mena discusses traditional literary criticism and its need to identify the "literary elements" in textual production from the period, while others argue for new theoretical definitions and provide specific guidelines for new research methods. Beatriz Mariscal Hay and José Antonio Muciño Ruiz make convincing cases for abandoning the notion of colonial literature as largely homogenous secular texts prized for their European-defined aesthetic values. They call for including a heterogeneous discourse that takes into account different periods, genres, and voices. Muciño Ruiz, for example, points a finger at the nineteenth-century intellectual paradigm that marginalized religious materials, thereby excluding a large part of the colonial textual production. Claudia Parodi provides valuable information on accessing previously marginal texts (often found in Mexican archives) and raises questions about editorial methods for publishing these works. Parodi also discusses perceptively the debate over modernized orthography, which does not reflect period pronunciation. In short, Buxó and Herrera's *La literatura novohispana* provides valuable studies of individual authors and genres as well as stimulating essays that attempt to redefine the field and move it into new areas of inquiry based on more vigorous archival research and theoretical methodologies.

Translations into English of Canonical and Noncanonical Texts

The sort of practical considerations explored by Parodi in *La literatura novohispana* have been applied to new editions and also to rigorous critical translations of canonical texts and previously unpublished or rarely studied works from the colonial period. The translations by Frances López-Morillas of a standard chronicle (edited and introduced by Enrique Pupo-Walker) and by Arthur J. O. Anderson of an evangelical text both place a premium on ensuring the reliability of the original Spanish or

Nahuatl edition used. They also address the literary elements and the historical context of the work, thus making a broad spectrum of primary sources accessible to a wide readership.

One of the more compelling and widely read accounts written from a sixteenth-century Spanish perspective, Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's *Castaways* (*Naufragios*) has been retranslated for the first time in three decades by Frances López-Morillas. Based on Enrique Pupo-Walker's definitive Spanish edition (1992) and including critical apparatus by him, *Castaways* is Núñez's first-person account of the outcome of Pánfilo Narváez's disastrous expedition to Florida in 1527. Of the nearly three hundred men that journeyed north from Tampa to Tallahassee after being shipwrecked, only four survived, traveling westward through present-day Louisiana and Texas until they rejoined other Spaniards eight years later. Núñez recorded tales of how the castaways avoided starvation by becoming cannibals and were enslaved by indigenous tribes. He also recounted his own eventual empowerment as a traveling shaman among Native Americans. In addition to providing significant ethnographic details and descriptions of local flora and fauna, the account reveals how a Spaniard adapted Native American practices to survive. Years later, as a penniless man forced to return to Spain, Núñez employed his writings to attempt to reclaim his political titles and land.

Pupo-Walker's critical apparatus, based on his own masterful critical edition of the 1555 version of *Naufragios*, reflects a thorough knowledge of the text and its historical context. Pupo-Walker's readable yet informative introduction is aimed at a general audience but includes appendices, notes, and bibliography extensive enough to satisfy scholars. He first draws out significant chronological considerations that bear on the text. Next he sketches out the key elements of a *relación* like *Castaways*, explaining the practical and self-defensive tone, the sense of provisionality, and the "autobiographical imperative to write history out of personal experience" (p. xxviii). For specialists and general readers who wish to delve further, Pupo-Walker's notes and appendices identify geographical locations, Native American groups, and the textual relationship between *Castaways* and Núñez's *Comentarios*.

Given the care taken in presenting the text and the book's well-balanced critical apparatus, its near silence about the process of translation comes as a surprise. López-Morillas, a noted translator of peninsular novels, conveys the lively style and vibrancy of the original text and clarifies obscure passages in the old Spanish. But we are not privy to her methodology because *Castaways* includes no translator's note about the challenges and peculiarities presented by a mid-sixteenth-century text. This omission is unfortunate, although not critical to the success of the work. *Castaways* is beautifully translated and a boon for those interested in reading reliable editions of the chronicles in English.

Castaways illustrates many traditional elements studied in the chronicles—an inherent petition, an intended Spanish audience, and narrative descriptions of “New World” peoples and nature. In contrast, Bernardino de Sahagún’s *Psalmodia Christiana* (*Christian Psalmody*) represents a category of colonial writings that has only recently captured the attention of literary critics. The previous bias against studying religious writings as literary texts often excluded works like the *Psalmodia*, which was written to help evangelize native speakers of Nahuatl. Arthur J. O. Anderson, one of the noted editors and translators of the *Florentine Codex* (with Charles Dibble), brings to an English-speaking audience for the first time a bilingual edition in Nahuatl and English of Sahagún’s work. Anderson makes available a rare Nahuatl text that has no contemporary Spanish translation. Composed more or less simultaneously with the *Florentine Codex* (circa 1558–1561), the *Psalmodia* circulated in manuscript form for nearly two decades before being published. Using trilingually trained Native Americans, Sahagún wrote the work in an attempt to redefine the centuries-old native tradition of song-dance. His work represented a response to the failure of other forms of evangelization, especially those relying on selected versions of native texts that had been transcribed and Christianized under Spanish supervision (such as the *Cantares mexicanos* and the collections by Pedro de Gante). As Anderson explains, native beliefs permeated many of these anthologies. Sahagún changed tactics and composed purely Christian psalms, but he overlaid them with Nahuatl elements to capture the interest of his audience. Sahagún echoed Nahuatl syntax, carefully selected nonthreatening indigenous imagery, and suggested that the canticles praising God and the saints could be adapted to native music and dance. Arranged according to the liturgical year, the psalms focus on such events as the birth and death of Christ and the feast days of important saints. To the untrained ear, the canticles ring with an unusual mixture of Nahuatl imagery combined with Christian dogma and iconography. For example, a psalm for the nativity of Christ reads: “Magnolias, upright, spread their smell; quetzal rattle-bell flowers, red solandras are outspreading like the early light of dawn; they glow like gold. Alleluia, alleluia” (p. 373).

Anderson’s introduction and text help readers understand both the Spanish evangelical mission (Sahagún’s role in particular) and the persistence of Nahuatl culture and beliefs after the conquest. His introduction provides a representative sampling of observations made by the friar’s contemporaries regarding the central song-dance tradition and its alterations under Spanish rule. Readers sense the difficulty that missionaries faced in attracting indigenous populations to Christianity and appreciate the tenacity of native traditions. Perhaps most interesting to nonspecialists is the discussion of Sahagún’s use of Nahuatl imagery and style. For example, the friar deliberately omitted images associated with war and

certain deities and invented stylistic and linguistic devices such as unusual compounds to describe concepts alien to Nahuatl culture. Anderson makes clear that the poetic voice that emerges is a far cry from the poetic accomplishments of native canticles. Sahagún reflected a sermonic doctrinal intent that only fleetingly achieves the lyric beauty of the native tradition.

Giving readers the guiding principles of his translation, Anderson explains that he opted for a free translation, although always respecting Nahuatl grammar and stylistic requirements. He did, however, alter repetitions of words that he considered monotonous, such as *very* and *great*. Readers are left to question how this practice might have affected the integrity of the translation and to wonder if these repetitions served a purpose in the original. Anderson also provides a good bibliography and scholarly footnotes that alert readers to marginal glosses in the manuscript. In sum, his masterful translation allows readers to see the sweep of Sahagún's undertakings and the various stages of evangelization and extirpation of non-Christian belief. With *Psalmodia*, Sahagún chose to close the door on an earlier stage—the transcription and Christianization of native canticles—and moved toward an all-Christian-based text, albeit one illustrated with select Nahuatl elements. By the eighteenth century, the Spanish Inquisition had stamped out even this mingling of cultures by censoring the *Psalmodia* and destroying most copies of the manuscript.

Monographs That Broaden the Field

Sahagún's text illustrates how the intended audience as well as the circumstances of living in America forced some Spanish authors to negotiate between a native culture (or cultures) and European tradition. This topic is taken up in Silvia Spitta's *Between Two Waters: Narratives of Transculturation in Latin America*. The phenomenon is also dealt with in Gordon Brotherston's *Book of the Fourth World: Reading the Native Americas through Their Literature*, but from the perspective of Native American traditions. Both monographs stand at the forefront of the issues being examined and the interdisciplinary approaches being taken in colonial literary studies. Both authors challenge the traditional definitions of a text, and both turn ideas about the passivity of the "conquered," the acculturation of "the Other," inside out. Native American cosmologies and cultural productions are depicted as dynamic and persistent, influencing many Spanish colonial works (Spitta) and thriving in post-Columbian indigenous communities (Brotherston). Readers of traditional canonical colonial texts will come away from Spitta's and Brotherston's works with their eyes opened to a compelling heterogeneous corpus of complex texts and intertexts that demand to be taken into consideration when redefining the field in the mid-1990s.

As Silvia Spitta's title implies, *Between Two Waters: Narratives of*

Transculturation in Latin America revolves around a theoretical consideration of transculturation (considered the process of interpenetration between distinct cultural influences) as evidenced in works written during the last five hundred years in Latin America. Ambitious in its aim, *Between Two Waters* first critiques previous theorists of transculturation: from Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz's reaction in the 1940s to the term *acculturation*, to Peruvian novelist José María Arguedas's view of culture as always in flux because of foreign influences, to Angel Rama's development of a culturalist approach, to the use of the term from a U.S.-based point of view by exiled Cuban writers Antonio Benítez Rojo and Gustavo Pérez Firmat. Spitta's examination of transculturation in Latin American literature challenges readers to "radically rewrite" literary tradition to reveal the essentially bicultural Latin American subject and the multiple cultural codes that inform the meaning of the text. She argues that in most Latin American literature, "the signifier is split between two or more cultures and becomes unstable" (p. 11), and she takes this view as her point of departure. Three concerns guide Spitta's analysis and choice of texts. The first is the idea that transculturation began with the Spanish Conquest. The second concern is that transculturation is a multiple process that includes "many different processes of assimilation, adaptation, rejection, parody, resistance, loss, and ultimately transformation of Spanish and indigenous cultures" (p. 24). The third is that the ambiguity and contradictory nature of signs and symbols in the colonial period illustrate the flux occurring among several systems of meanings, a dynamic that produced questions of identity persisting into our own time.

Between Two Waters demonstrates the continued workings of this process in contemporary novelists such as José María Arguedas, Elena Garro, and Gloria Anzaldúa. But for the purposes of this review, I will examine only the three chapters on colonial narratives. Keeping true to her stated goal and always situating her analysis in a concise contextual overview, Spitta begins chapter by chapter to remedy researchers' neglect of the process of transculturation in Spanish texts. First she examines Alvar Núñez's account of his shamanistic practices, arguing convincingly that his narrative demonstrates a syncretic use of European and Native American religious practices and narrative devices. Although Alvar Núñez framed his experience in Christian terms, he described clearly "idolatrous practices" based on indigenous customs and beliefs. He mobilized American codes to such an extent that when he was finally reunited with Spaniards, as Spitta points out, a gap opened in the chronicler's narrative stance. He referred to his party of Spaniards and Native Americans as "*nosotros*" and the Spaniards with Cortés as "*los cristianos.*"

This same process of transculturation is examined and used as a call to action in the two subsequent chapters on traditionally noncanonical texts. The first makes persuasive claims for studying Spanish works by

extirpators of idolatrous practices (such as José de Arriaga, Francisco de Avila, and Pérez de Bocanegra) to perceive how evangelization led to the need to understand native religious practices and the dilemmas this process presented. The texts were necessarily a hybrid oscillating between ethnography and religion, which created a diverse system of meaning that often altered Christian intentions. Spitta points out how priests in remote areas often introduced or tolerated more non-Christian elements. Her chapter on the Cuzco school of painting further illustrates the church's lack of success in constraining the incorporation of Andean elements into creative works. Andean cosmology was often superimposed over or juxtaposed with Christian iconography, creating such examples as the mountain-shaped virgin that conflates the Virgin Mary with Pachamama, the Earth Mother. Spitta surveys the idiosyncratic use of color, which often replaced European symbolic colors with Andean ones; the use of painting as a mnemonic device for telling native history; and the refocusing and reshuffling of Christian themes and hierarchies to reflect Andean views. She also helps readers glimpse the degree of alterations in imagery and iconography and shows how some illustrations, such as those by Guaman Poma, disguise Andean animism. Spitta argues for recognizing the persistence of native cosmology in works throughout the colonial period and into the twentieth century. Her chapters bring together an admirable range of colonial materials and theoretical considerations that ultimately makes readers question what other Native American elements might be found in works that have generally been analyzed with an eye only to European conventions.

The issue of defining a literary text lies at the heart of Gordon Brotherston's *Book of the Fourth World: Reading the Native Americas through Their Literature*. The author sets out to debunk Western conventions that have limited the perceived scope of textual production and argues for a broad definition that would include Native Americans' diverse visual records, ranging from Navajo dry paintings to Andean *quipus* and Algonquin scrolls. Brotherston's book looks at traditions in all the Americas, from what is now present-day Alaska to Chile, both before and after 1492. It is impossible to read this work and continue to claim, like many traditional literary critics (and even famed anthropologists like Claude Lévi-Strauss), that little native scriptural tradition existed, that it was by and large an oral culture. Impressive, lengthy, almost encyclopedic, *Book of the Fourth World* urges readers to consider the continuity and coherence of overlapping political ideas, cosmologies, and story patterns among indigenous groups. Brotherston explains in the prefatory notes that his purpose is to attend to "native coherence ceaselessly splintered by Western politics and philosophy" (p. xi). He attempts to "correlate" (as opposed to resolve) questions about definitions and modes of writing, mapping, calendar-making, and so forth, while considering the roles of cosmology and

politics in Native American traditions. The *Fourth World*—a term first coined in the sixteenth century to illustrate America's parity with Africa, Asia, and Europe—teemed with modes of representation and configurations of time and space that have long been overridden, or at least fragmented, by imported ideologies and literary notions. Taking as his manifesto the declaration put forth by the Conference of Nations in Quito in 1990, Brotherston examines the scriptural continuity and resistance of indigenous tradition in four parts: the scope of texts that can be drawn on; the political memory found in Fourth World historiographies; the genesis of many Native American stories and beliefs; and the vitality of Native American languages and cosmologies in post-Columbian translations of European stories.

To accomplish his task, Brotherston draws on a variety of disciplines, including literary criticism, linguistics, anthropology, and ethnohistory. Parts I and II are particularly far-reaching in the disciplines that inform the approach. In the first, Brotherston gives an impressive overview of the geopolitical space that comprised the Fourth World before the conquest—the Caribbean, Mesoamerica, Greater Mexico and Turtle Island (large parts of the present-day United States and Canada), Tahuantinsuyu (the Inca Empire), and beyond Tahuantinsuyu (for example, the Mapuche from present-day Chile). He also surveys the types of texts that these groups tended to produce, including iconic script, hieroglyphs, and *quipus*. Brotherston argues convincingly that the Americas were “well-mapped” before the arrival of the Europeans and that the West's prejudice has impeded understanding of the complex Native American grammologies and taxonomies of genre types and orders of composition found in native traditions. To help readers perceive the achievement of Native American culture, he first explains Fourth World configurations of space and time. In Part II, Brotherston expands this process to include a look at historiography in four areas (Maya, Toltec, Turtle Island, Tahuantinsuyu) in a way that strives to respect the distinctiveness of traditions and political systems and yet to appreciate the commonalities that emerge. This section is especially useful for understanding the whereabouts of manuscripts and extant versions.

Brotherston's training and skill as a literary critic shine in Parts III and IV, as he settles into close readings of paradigmatic texts. Always searching for parallel and recurring cultural traditions, Brotherston examines the Quiché Mayan *Popol Vuh* as “the Bible of America” in its story of creation, outstanding literary achievement, and echoes in a wide range of other traditions. Diverse stories of epic transformations and the role of the cosmos also serve as material for analysis and support the thesis of coherence and continuity among texts. The vitality of these traditions becomes clear in the fourth part's study of the translations of Old World secular texts into a variety of Fourth World languages. Examining the

complex adaptation of Aesop's fables, the story of Tawaddud from *Arabian Nights*, and Cinderella, among others, reveals the persistence of Native American preferences and views as indigenous writers chose to translate texts and alter them—sometimes “almost beyond recognition,” as in the case of Aesop's fables (p. 319). Much like Spitta, Brotherston concludes that adaptations and rewritings of these traditions fill Latin American literary works written since 1949 (such as Miguel Angel Asturias's *Hombres de maíz*, published in 1949). They form an “American palimpsest” in works like Ernesto Cardenal's *Homenaje a los indios americanos* (1969).

The probably unanswerable question remains as to whether the degree of coherence in Fourth World texts that Brotherston posits actually existed (given our own Western education, which fosters the need to impose a unifying system on such a diversity of forms of representation). Nonetheless, *Book of the Fourth World* succeeds brilliantly in helping readers perceive the diversity of languages and scripts and yet view the literature of the Fourth World as “chapters of a single book, one that contains not just patterns of timeless myth but physical maps of history and world age” (p. 341). This densely written monograph is also a reference book—with its forty-page bibliography, sixty pages of notes and glossary, and extensive plates, graphs, and maps. *Book of the Fourth World* is thus a good text for initiating the uninitiated into Native American literary traditions and an aid to specialists in developing new perspectives.

Conclusion

Often a marginal field of study for literary critics until the last two decades, colonial Latin American literature has been transformed by the broadening of the canon and the new methodologies used. Colonial discourse boasts a generic and cultural richness and complexity that has captured the attention of students and scholars, resulting in a boom in graduate courses, conferences, and publications. Moreover, the vitality of the field shows no signs of diminishing. Two recent archival discoveries—a previously unpublished letter by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (the work of Elías Trabulse) and a controversial manuscript that may suggest that Guaman Poma was not the sole author of the *Nueva Corónica* (Laura Laurencicci's work)—indicate the abundance of material yet to be uncovered, examined, and debated. As disciplines join forces to study these findings, the field will no doubt continue to exhibit dynamic change.