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## REVIEW ESSAYS

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### MOBILIZING AND NEGOTIATING MEANINGS

Studies in the Dynamics of Colonial-Imperial  
Transformations in Art, Science, Law, Historiography, and  
Identities in the Ibero-American World, 1500–1800

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**Creole Subjects in the Colonial Americas: Empires, Texts, Identities.** Edited by Ralph Bauer and José Antonio Mazzotti. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2009. Pp. ix + 503. \$75.00 cloth, \$27.50 paper.

**Science in the Spanish and Portuguese Empires, 1500–1800.** Edited by Daniela Bleichmar, Paula De Vos, Kristin Juffine, and Kevin Sheehan. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009. Pp. xxii + 427. \$65.00 cloth.

**Invasion and Transformation: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Conquest of Mexico.** Edited by Rebecca P. Brien and Margaret A. Jackson. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2008. Pp. xii + 231. \$55.00 cloth.

**Empire of Law and Indian Justice in Colonial Mexico.** By Brian P. Owensby. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008. Pp. x + 379. \$65.00 cloth.

**Secret Science: Spanish Cosmography and the New World.** By María M. Portuondo. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009. Pp. xii + 335. \$45.00 cloth.

**El discurso colonial en textos novohispanos: Espacio, cuerpo y poder.**

By Sergio Rivera-Ayala. Woodbridge, U.K.: Tamesis, 2009. Pp. viii + 221. \$105.00 cloth.

**Measuring the New World: Enlightenment Science and South America.**

By Neil Safier. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. Pp. xviii + 387. \$45.00 cloth.

**The Art of Being In-Between: Native Intermediaries, Indian Identity, and Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca.**

By Yanna Yannakakis. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008. Pp. xxi + 290. \$79.95 cloth, \$22.95 paper.

If the philosophical inquiry of Edmundo O’Gorman into the constructiveness of America as a “new world” had the virtue of reorienting colonial studies away from an empirical or narrative approach that assumed the subject position of European explorers, colonizers, and imperial historians, the discovery of Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala’s *Primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (1615) by the Danish scholar Richard Pietschmann in 1908 had the effect of reintroducing Amerindian actors into an historical scene occupied mainly by European men cast as protagonists of conquest and its political and cultural aftermath.<sup>1</sup> Critiques of O’Gorman’s process of invention contributed in multiple ways to the polemics that in 1992 marked the controversial memory of 1492, much as the trend to deconstruct, reexamine, and contest historiographical assumptions and methods, fueled in part by the postmodern critique at large, informs the books under review here. However, these books seek to revise and, in some cases, challenge established narratives of empire in accord with disparate concerns that respond, each in its own way, to the parameters of the author’s field (art history, ethnohistory, literary history, Spanish history).

Though revisionary, these interventions do not have in mind similar or related outcomes. For instance, the stated aim of the three studies on cosmographers, botanists, and cartographers in the Spanish and Portuguese empires between 1500 and 1800 is to revise the understanding that Iberians did not engage in scientific work during that period. Almost unrelated and beyond the Spanish science polemic, Neil Safier engages various discursive operations in the production of the New World and its relation to the development of Enlightenment science. Safier’s erudite study of Charles Marie de La Condamine’s scientific expedition to measure the world from 1735 to 1745 problematizes the heroic image of the explorer “out there,” as Michel de Certeau conceives of the space of exploration. In paying intense attention to the reception and circulation of knowledge, goods, and specimens, both in Europe and in South America, Safier paints

1. Edmundo O’Gorman, *La invención de América* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1958).

a complex and illuminating picture of the making and mobilization of meanings, understandings, and misunderstandings during the second half of the eighteenth century.

As does Safier, Brian P. Owensby engages the question of cultural transformations in his superb study of Spanish law and its encounter with Indian justice in late-colonial Mexico, as ideas, institutions, and actors traveled the asymmetrical settings of empire. The involvement and agency of Amerindian subjects in the power dynamics of empire appear at center stage, both in Owensby's *Empire of Law and Indian Justice in Colonial Mexico* and in *The Art of Being In-Between*, by Yanna Yannakakis. Amerindians as agents or subjects of knowledge and art come into view in strongly redefined and theorized secondary spaces in Safier's *Measuring the New World* and in *Invasion and Transformation*, an interdisciplinary collection of essays that reconsider images of the conquest of Mexico. Deploying the problematics of "mythistory" (Mathew Restall), mimicry (Safier), and performative identities (Yannakakis), as well as the notion that possession is never total in colonial situations but instead always contested and precarious (Owensby), these books shed vibrant light on the dynamics of social and intellectual life at local spatiotemporal sites in the vastness of empire. Negotiations of meaning and power in Paris, Mexico City, Goa, Madrid, Oaxaca, and Lisbon become visible in rich and full detail. The exhaustive and judicious use of archival materials introduces new players to the world stage of empire and tells stories that were only partially known, such as the Encyclopedists' reception of La Condamine, or largely ignored, such as the Indian rebellions in Oaxaca in 1661 and 1700.

Beyond the different disciplinary and historiographical approaches evinced in these studies, it is important to highlight their authors' meticulous readings of archival and published sources. Perhaps the other shared characteristic or underlining theme in all these books is the singular role of imperial crowns and their representatives. Bureau cosmographers, navigators, cartographers at sea or at court, judges, painters, architects, and even the insurgent Indians who become visible in these studies are all interpellated by a system of production (of knowledge, subjectivities, arts, and power), which the Crown ultimately presided over. In filing and assessing chronicles written in the field, reporting on mines and ports in the New World, crafting new laws, negotiating spaces-in-between for colonial accommodation with Indians, receiving and cataloging paintings and botanies, censoring, and limiting the scope of scientific exploration, the Crown's agents played an inevitable and determinant role.

The Crown and its organic intellectuals make regular, if at times unexpected, appearances in most scenes of the theater of empire here assembled. The close relations between the imperial state and its informational and discursive needs remain undertheorized in a good many studies on science, and even in new work on chronicles read as literature, because

such ties are taken for granted, assumed as a feature of empire. The contributions of Restall and Michael J. Schreffler to *Invasion and Transformation*, however, are excellent examples of how a critical revamping of such assumptions can lead to a fuller and more accurate understanding of particular paintings, *boticarios*, voyages of discovery, and other cultural phenomena in the fabric of empire.

#### SCIENCE

*Science in the Spanish and Portuguese Empires* is part of an effort to reassess the roles of Spain and Portugal in early modern science. This trend originated, according to David Goodman, in the 1992 celebrations of Columbus's first voyage, which motivated Spanish intellectuals, and indeed the government, to launch an ambitious program of research, led by the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, on the "history of culture and science with reference to relations between the Old and the New World" (10–11). Another impetus was the idea that the narrative of Western science had failed to take into consideration the work of cosmographers, cartographers, and botanists working under the aegis of the Spanish and Portuguese crowns. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra explains in his preface that the volume intends to recover and examine examples of Spanish and Portuguese "practices of science during the early modern period," so as to point to their "contribution to the Scientific Revolution in Europe and abroad" (xix). The fourteen essays by North American, Iberian, and Brazilian scholars range widely in period, topic, and approach, and they evince a broad understanding of the term *science*. Much of this research is based on fresh archival material, informed by an empirical approach, and rendered in direct prose.

The collection opens with a most helpful historiographical review of Portuguese imperial science by Palmira Fontes da Costa and Henrique Leitão. It then moves to a variety of intriguing topics, such as Juan Pimentel's intellectual history of the Spanish baroque theologian, ascetic, and collector Juan E. Nieremberg (1595–1658). Shifting to the colonies, Martha Few examines the imbrications of gender, medicine, and the state in a specific setting in "Medical Mestizaje and the Politics of Pregnancy in Colonial Guatemala, 1660–1730." In these and other case histories—of the cosmographer Juan López de Velasco in the Casa de Contratación in Seville, his successor Nieremberg at the Palace of the Count-Duke of Olivares, the 1606 voyage of Pedro de Quiróz to the western Pacific island of Espiritu Santo, the collection of medicinal plants and treatments in Goa and their dissemination in Portugal's global empire—scientific knowledge takes shape as the accumulation of information for holding and dispensing in specific political situations, as befits the parameters of collecting in a pre-Linnaean and pre-Newtonian universe.

In some sense, this endless extracting and collecting led more to the problematics of the cabinet of curiosities than to the laboratory. In the former, the challenge the New World posed to European learning and epistemologies dissolved into a catchall assemblage of the rare, the singular, and the extraordinary. Because such activity was carried out at the limits of an unsuitable epistemology that included reasoning by analogy, as Pimentel shows in regard to Nieremberg, its association with Newtonian science remains doubtful, if not confusing, as Pimentel and Paula de Vos both point out. The difference between doing modern science and organizing a cabinet of curiosities needs to be clarified. From Pimentel's comments, as well as from Goodman's article and María Portuondo's discussion of the polemics of science in the introduction to her *Secret Science: Spanish Cosmography and the New World*, the reader is left to wonder whether the attempt to include medieval cosmography and technologies has not extended the term *science* beyond its historical and epistemological limits. Pimentel observes that "the fate of the Hispanic monarchy in the development of modern science seems trapped within the same paradox as is baroque culture," for both "imperial science and the baroque arts [are seen] as foreign bodies in the making of modernity" (93). Pimentel notes that, unlike Newton, Nieremberg "did not deduce any fundamental laws of nature" and "[h]is works on natural philosophy and natural history, seen retrospectively, do not contain a single idea that has turned out to be decisive in the development of our knowledge" (97). This is not to say that debate on the practice of science in early modern Iberia is no longer needed. However, a clear difference emerges from this volume between the activity of Spanish cartographers, laboring at their desks in palaces and libraries, and Portuguese maritime science and cartography. Only the latter, based on exploration and empirical research, produced a series of findings marked by true, physical, and practical links to the natural world to provide a foundation for its understanding.

Portuondo's *Secret Science* constructs a powerful narrative on the relationships among three cosmographers—Alonso de Santa Cruz, López de Velasco, and Juan Bautista Gesio—and the apparatus of censorship in imperial Spain. This book begins with a necessary first chapter on the adaptation, in Renaissance thought, of Ptolemy's cosmography to the epistemological challenge the New World's difference posed. A number of influential studies over the past decades have addressed from different perspectives the profound discomfort and displacement experienced in European intellectual and artistic circles in the face of America's material and cultural realities. These include Michel de Certeau's *L'écriture de l'histoire* (1975); Antonello Gerbi's *La natura delle Indie nove* (1975); Anthony Grafton, April Shelford, and Nancy Siraisi's *New Worlds, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery* (1992); and Walter Mignolo's *The Darker Side of the Renaissance* (1995), to name just a few.

For historians of the Renaissance such as Grafton, “[t]he encounter between Europe and America juxtaposed a vast number of inconvenient facts with the elegant theories embodied in previously authoritative books.”<sup>2</sup> For cultural analysts such as Mignolo, this reconstruction and analysis of Europe’s discomfort falls short of the mark, for it reinscribes Europe as the subject of its enunciation, leaving the rest of the world as the object. Mignolo accordingly seeks instead “to inscribe the ‘darker side of the Renaissance’ into the silenced space of Spanish/Latin America and Amerindian contributions to universal history and to postcolonial theorizing.”<sup>3</sup> To meet this challenge, it is necessary to shuttle constantly across the Atlantic and across epistemologies, as in Barbara E. Mundy’s *The Mapping of New Spain: Indigenous Cartography and the Maps of the “Relaciones geográficas”* (1996) or Mignolo’s own account of the darker side of epistemologies born and deployed in the crucible of conquest and empire.

Portuondo maintains a firm focus on events taking place in Madrid and more specifically at institutions integrally connected to the king’s political interests. Her erudite study of court and cabinet goes a long way toward recovering and narrating the vicissitudes of discomfort and the transformations wrought in Spain’s inherited cosmography, both at authorized sites of learning such as universities and at sea. Her own background in engineering allows her a clear understanding of the science at hand, particularly in explaining the technical difficulties that sailors encountered in using the navigational instruments at their disposal. She examines the intricacies of humanist navigational manuals, which “sought to establish the art of navigation on a theoretical footing consistent with established principles of natural philosophy. Authors drew upon the principles of the sphere as systematized by Sacrobosco, the fundamentals of Ptolemaic cartography, and, in varying measures, practical nautical experience to produce this immensely popular genre” (50). Spanish sailors and manuals alike not only benefited from adapting Ptolemaic ideas and instruments to new Atlantic realties but also owed some of their information to Portuguese *roteiros*.

By the end of the sixteenth century, Portuondo shows, traditional cosmography had reached its limits, especially when confronted with the impossibility of producing a description of the New World from within the parameters of its discipline. The task now became to organize and present useful information to the Spanish Crown so it could effectively rule its empire. Besides military force, evangelist priests, and colonial administrators, Spain needed hegemonic access to accurate information. To that

2. Anthony Grafton, with April Shelford and Nanci Siraisi, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 5.

3. Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), xi.

end, the Crown turned to the Casa de Contratación in Seville, where cosmographers such as López de Velasco were entrusted with the production of knowledge and, most particularly, the secrecy of that enterprise. *Secret Science* tells the intriguing story of three sites of knowledge—*casa (de contratación)*, *consejo (de Indias)*, and *corte (real)*—to show the enabling and paradoxical constraints of the material and intellectual conditions under which cosmographers such as López de Velasco, Santa Cruz, and Gesio attempted to carry out their twofold task: on the one hand, to describe, classify, and understand the New World on the basis of Old World paradigms and, on the other hand, to make their findings of difference intelligible to uninformed yet influential others—as well as to keep all the data secret and pass the censors.

Relying on an abundance of fresh archival sources, such as the correspondence of López de Velasco, Portuondo deftly intertwines her figures' biographies with ample discussion of how they developed methods of inquiry to retrieve and assemble the data deemed necessary for their cosmographies. In the end, these well-educated consummate bureaucrats appear overwhelmed by the power games they were obliged to play in the absence of tenure and to carry out a task that was already beyond the reach of cosmography. Because the work of these bureau cosmographers was never published, and because of Portuondo's original research into these figures' attempt to find a secondary mode to represent what they (mistakenly) took to be raw empirical data, *Secret Science* opens a window onto a long-neglected area in Spain's intellectual history: the production and administration of knowledge for a few policy makers, many of whom, like the king, lacked any expertise in cartography.

In contrast, *Measuring the New World* treats the public performance of science and other knowledge in the France of Denis Diderot's *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (1751). La Condamine's voyage to Quito in 1735 and return via the Amazon River speaks of movement, displacement, dispersion, and planned and unexpected encounters with other subjects of knowledge. Safier writes a complex social and intellectual history of La Condamine's entanglements with Spanish American Creoles such as the distinguished cartographer Pedro Vicente Maldonado, Amerindian informants in Quito, and his vexed journey down the Amazon. It seems that, in the eyes of La Condamine, there was no important difference between the information obtained from questioning Amerindians about their geographic knowledge and that borrowed from local Creole cartographers. Once back in Paris, he erased the provenance of his scientific information and presented it as his own. In his story of the tangle of disputations that make up La Condamine's voyage and the subsequent wrestling for public acclaim and scientific credit in cosmopolitan Paris, Safier also provides an informative explanation of Jorge Juan and Antonio de Ulloa's expedition, and the controversy that surrounded it.

In focusing on scientific exploration in the postencyclopedia eighteenth century, Safier brings to the fore the reception and construction of cultural understanding. A telling case is his examination of the reception accorded to the abbreviated and reorganized translation (1744) of Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's *Comentarios reales* (1609), whose first French translation appeared in 1633. The disfiguring mutilation of the *Comentarios reales* is placed in two contexts. One is the craze for all things Inca that hit Paris in the mid-eighteenth century, Voltaire's *Alzire* (1736) being a chief example. The second relates to the Encyclopedists' search for a discursive modality able to transpose the order of the things displayed in the cabinet of curiosities into the alphabetic classificatory system adopted for the universal reach of their *Encyclopédie*.

As Michel Foucault observed in *Les mots et les choses* (*The Order of Things*, 1965), Jorge Luis Borges perceived and ironically examined this dilemma in his "El idioma analítico de John Wilkins" (1941). Foucault noted that Borges "quotes a 'certain Chinese encyclopaedia' in which it is written that 'animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification.'"<sup>4</sup> This uncanny understanding that the criteria used in taxonomy are all equally arbitrary in their relation to reality led Foucault, in turn, to question "all the familiar landmarks of my thought—our thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography—breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things, and continuing long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between Same and Other."<sup>5</sup> Safier catches a particular moment in this process, in which La Condamine's accounts of material and social life in South America, and even the mutilated translation of Inca Garcilaso, provided a forum to share and assess new knowledge from overseas. However, Safier summarizes, "the challenge of how to reduce the natural knowledge into parsed, alphabetically organized units on the printed page remained unresolved. Textual spaces abided by a different kind of organizational logic than the institutions in which physical objects were stored and managed. This transposition of specimens, from the cabinet to the catalogue, represented a shift between two radically different representational modes" (241).

One of the most interesting aspects of *Measuring the World* is its refusal to focus on La Condamine, Paris, or Europe alone. Instead, it situates La Condamine's acts in direct relation to his interlocutors, bringing to the

4. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1971), xv. Foucault cites Borges's essay "El idioma analítico de John Wilkins" (1942), as republished in *Otras inquisiciones* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1952).

5. Foucault, *Order of Things*, xv.



fore important and previously effaced Spanish American and Amerindian actors. Safier's narrative indeed moves back and forth across the Atlantic, opening, for example, not in 1735 with La Condamine's preparations in Paris or with the controversy attending a project to go "out there" to measure the world for the purposes of science and empire, but instead with a festival held in 1739 in the remote village of Tarqui, in the province of Quito, to keep alive the memory of the past by enacting scenes and plays. La Condamine witnessed this event, which included a reenactment of the Spanish reconquest and an interlude commemorating the recent visit of the French scientists. In Safier's retelling, a group of young Tarqui mestizos "wheeled out several wooden devices, constructed and painted specially for the occasion, and began to fiddle with the virtual parts just as a Parisian astronomer might calibrate a quadrant or a zenith telescope. . . . Using improvised writing implements, they scribbled data onto small sheets of invisible paper" in an act of communication that suggests that, "to encompass the world with their instrumental observations[, Europeans] had to rely on the active participation of resident guides, laborers, and knowledge brokers" (2–3). Although La Condamine admired the accuracy of this performance and the Tarquis's keen observation, in the end, the Amerindians merited, at best, his laughter. For Safier, however, this "Andean pantomime" remained "inscrutable," for it resists our interpretation even if we resort to notions of mimicry or reverse ethnography. I wonder if this "pantomime," as labeled by our taxonomic system, might have (another) meaning in Andean rhetoric. Alas, we have only La Condamine's record and logic of the event, which, for Safier, reveals that "science is a socially circumscribed and materially bounded spectacle" (5).

This Foucauldian conception of science as spectacle informs Safier's interpretation of the many displays, actions, and acts of reception in his groundbreaking work. Each chapter presents a canvas whose variegated threads imply the effaced but always dialogic or triangulated relation of the scientist's discourse to local knowledge, colonial agents, and sites of enunciation. This is most evident when Safier discusses France's thirty-year Inca craze, which had its apogee in the nearly simultaneous issue of La Condamine's *Relation abrégée d'un voyage fait dans l'intérieur de l'Amérique méridionale* (1745) and the abridged *Comentarios reales* (1744), an exposition on the Inca empire at the Jardin du Roi and France's agricultural crisis and famine. Though intended to portray the Inca as an example of superior imperial rule, the abridged text of Garcilaso's work could not overcome the denigration of Amerindian peoples and learning that Spanish chroniclers bequeathed as a gesture of empire. As a result, Safier contends, this abridgment was akin to the specimens displayed at the Jardin du Roi, because the *Comentarios* lost their historical thrust and became instead "a botanical theater" (209). Safier's entire book, and this chapter especially, will interest not only historians of science and empire but also scholars

of literature and visual arts, for he unfolds a keen set of concepts to facilitate the understanding of forms and modes of cognition that transcend disciplines.

#### LETTERED SUBJECTS AND EMPIRE

Sergio Rivera-Ayala also brings an interdisciplinary outlook to his discussion of the construction of space, the masculine body, and power in Spanish chronicles of the seventeenth century. Writing in the wake of Enrique Dussel's challenge to self-centered European accounts of the conquest and to the "myth of modernity" (3), Rivera-Ayala reconnoiters with a fresh spirit the well-worn but never exhausted letters, reports, and chronicles that, in Europe's rather narrow archive, depict American space, nature, and Amerindian bodies as a chapter in the annals of the exceptional and monstrous. Informed by a keen reading of the bibliography on the construction of the Other, he takes up where Pimentel's comments on Nieremberg left off, linking the Other in descriptions of the New World to medieval Orientalism as it was still embodied in Europe's constrained encyclopedism. His discussion of the *oikoumene*, the monstrous, and the emergence of white skin as a sign of beauty exemplifies the painstaking research and renovation that he brings to the study of the medieval epistemes that informed colonialism. His chief concern is not to locate the exact textual origin of images of monsters and *cinocéfalos* (dog-headed beings) but to point to the political import of those images, which arose in Christian Europe's struggle with the rival Moors. For Rivera-Ayala, the images were part of a strategy of domination based on the idea that monstrous bodies could afear or make ugly the presumed order and harmony of the established order and the homogenous self-identified community.

Stretching this thesis to the eighteenth century and what he calls "el ambiente geopolítico de la 'conciencia planetaria'" (165–176), Rivera-Ayala argues that, despite Spain's displacement from what G. W. F. Hegel called "the heart of Europe" (157), a second discourse emerged in Europe under the cloak of science and civilization to attempt yet another conquest of America. In contrast, and in consonance with O'Gorman's deployment of the term *invention*, Creoles in Mexico attempted to revalidate "la historiografía del Nuevo Mundo que estaba siendo negada por Europa . . . , con la cual se realizaba la re-invenición y la reconquista criolla de los territorios americanos" (188). Not unlike Safier, Rivera-Ayala seeks to show how the language and spectacle of science projected a deriding fatalism about the original peoples of America, here typified by the humid humors to which they were subject, according to Buffon and De Pauw. However, Rivera-Ayala does not close with a European view of Amerindians. Instead, he moves on to study of the Jesuit Francisco Javier Clavijero, whose works moved to counter the contemptuous view of French Encyclopedists

and scientists. Rivero-Ayala insists that Clavijero's vindication of Amerindian historiography negated the harmful planetary taxonomy of Europe's colonialist discourses and provided a foundation for the nascent republic of Mexico.<sup>6</sup>

Further expanding the scope of colonial social and discursive spaces, the twenty essays of *Creole Subjects in the Colonial Americas* juxtapose well-known topics from the study of Spanish America—Guamán Poma, cannibalism, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, New Christians—to examples of creolization in England's colonies, including studies on the literary Chesapeake between 1680 and 1750, as well as William Byrd II and the language of science and satire in British America. As the editors explain, the intent is to foster comparative American studies on a north-south axis. Many of the essays accordingly review the debate on the meaning and political deployment of colonial difference—difference understood as inferiority—which Safier and Rivera-Ayala also examine. In this, humoral differences are of special interest, as they connect to the historiography of science and empire. In a more literary vein, David S. Shields shows how the heroic figure of the English privateer is part and parcel of the English discourse of expansionism and how it was deployed in the context of the Black Legend. Jeffrey H. Richards shows how ideas about cultural change and difference evolved as they were transplanted to British America because of considerations involving the nature of climate and landscape of the New World.

Several essays about the eighteenth century complement what we have seen on the vexed participation of Spanish American scientists and the role of Amerindian past in European debates by bringing to the fore neglected figures in the Spanish American canon, such as the savant Pedro de Peralta Barnuevo and the poet José Joaquín de Olmedo. The collection as a whole also shows the impact of O'Gorman, postcolonial theory, and the challenge of subaltern studies while, more important, holding forth the promise of dialogue between fields that operate in very different scholarly traditions. Comparative work remains a future task for many, as it is not easy for individuals to undertake mastering different archives. To do so requires a new hermeneutics of reading, as David Damrosch proposes in *How to Read World Literature*.<sup>7</sup>

#### COLONIAL "PEACE" AND THE EXHAUSTION OF SITES OF NEGOTIATION

The richly detailed studies of Owensby and Yannakakis do not so much describe colonial life as offer a textured feel for the intricacy and complexity that empire brought to the lives of ordinary people, in this case, to In-

6. In the latter assertion, Rivero-Ayala follows the analysis of David A. Brading.

7. David Damrosch, *How to Read World Literature* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2009).

dians in Mexico. Owensby opens by reconceptualizing the law, depicting it not so much as an imposition from a location of power but, in America, as a medium through which Indians channeled their thirst for order and justice. Accordingly, “law and its processes . . . can be thought of as a politics by another name, a means to reclaiming the political for the colonial period” (11). Owensby’s exhaustive archival research assembles a set of petitions and lawsuits, which both men and women brought, seeking protection, clear titles to land, guarantees of individual liberty, or resolution of matters of tribute and governance. In one superb chapter after another, these people appear embarked on a dual process of representation. To plead their causes effectively, they had to become fully cognizant of the law, its rhetorical nuances and quirks, and the possibilities of bending it to their advantage. As subjects shaped by legal protections, Indians also had to engage the politics of the law, constantly negotiating its meaning and action with the Crown’s representatives. Owensby strives to bring out the “enormous perplexities” (9) imbedded in each case and their representation in a range of legal documentation, haunted by an awareness that the penumbra of a vexed and often-paradoxical struggle for justice mars the clarity to which he aspires.

*Empire of Law and Indian Justice* examines Indians’ efforts to order their existence in the aftermath of conquest (chapter 2), the relentless litigation by which they sought to make the king protector of their well-being (chapter 3), centuries of lawsuits over ownership of land (chapter 4), and Indians’ struggle to achieve some measure of liberty under Spanish rule and to avoid complete servitude (chapter 5). The chapters relate a story of contestation, negotiation, transculturation, a story of how both Spaniards and Indians became subjects of Spanish imperial law. They also paint the very slow, costly, almost-sacrificial, and uneven gaining of agency by individual Indians and communities living under the coercive setup of coloniality. This colonial peace, which relied on the hope of royal protection and fostered the Indians’ obedience to the idea of the common good, began to unravel in the face of relentless abuse and unaccountability by elites and administrators. By 1656, the corregidor of New Spain, Bartolomé de Góngora, was forced to acknowledge that a Hobbesian world was now in place, and it went by the name of *aprovechamiento*, that is to say, administrative office afforded the appointee and his family an opportunity to exploit Indians to leave the office wealthier and more powerful. Under such a universal attack on their person and possessions, some Indians began to feel (though perhaps not in the same words) what the cacique Fabián Martín, leader of the Tehuantepec rebellion of 1660–1661, said before he was hanged: “My brothers, I do not die as a traitor to the King our Lord, nor for disobedience, nor for having led an uprising, but for the repartimientos” (250). Oaxaca’s Indians had begun to realize that their hopes for royal justice were perhaps misplaced, given that the king was

so far away and greedy *peninsulares* and Creoles were a daily reality in the struggle for land (*repartimientos*).

From the thousands of legal cases that Owensby studied, it is not hard to see that litigation did, in the end, despite the narrow and punishing space colonial practices afforded, contribute to the emergence of Mexico's Indians as subjects of the law and as contenders for agency in the minds of contemporary *peninsulares*, Creoles, and mestizos. The discourse of *amparo* and *culpa* taught them where and how to find protections and how to win small concessions and redresses. As Owensby explains, it therefore "makes no sense to think of New Spain's indigenous people as having 'virtually no agenda of their own'" (302). However, it also follows that accommodation, negotiation, and negative political participation cannot replace equal rights and full citizenship in the affairs of the commonwealth; for, as both Owensby and Yannakakis show, things eventually unravel in huge and costly rebellions. On such occasions, Indians paid yet again, with more lives and punishments, even when they made paper gains, as occurred in the Tehuantepec rebellion of 1661 and forty years later in northern Oaxaca.

In September 1700, after one hundred years of pacification (not peace) and evangelization in the region of Oaxaca, Mexico, the Zapotec residents of San Francisco Cajonos rose in violent rebellion in response to a new campaign to extirpate idolatry. Not unlike earlier campaigns in Peru, this campaign affected not only questions of religious belief but also the entire living structure of the Zapotec. The first chapters of Yannakakis's remarkable book examine how "loyal vassals" morphed into "seditious subjects," "idolaters," and rebels," and how, in the anxious vocabulary of empire, these subjects were reclassified as "good and faithful Indians" between 1660 and 1700. This deft analysis is made possible not by considering the rebellion of Cajonos under the fixed terms of a racio-hierarchical classification but by deploying a critical interrogation of the very taxonomy and power relations in play.

With the lens of performance theory, Yannakakis maintains that Spanish rule, not content with the use of grisly punishments or every other tool in the arsenal of spiritual conquest, including confession, thoroughly reorganized the Mexican church and state, leaving prior intermediaries in limbo but serving the rulers' interest more efficiently. Part of this reconstruction involved what Yannakakis ably terms a "symbolic warfare" that pitted "good and faithful Indians" against "idolaters" (94). The latter accusation was so feared that it drove many cultural practices underground, menacing the Zapotecs' cultural survival, as subsequent chapters on new strategies for negotiating local rule between 1700 and 1770 show. In this period, wealthy and poor caciques were once again called to play the dubious role of intermediaries. The wealthy were able to use their economic status and litigation skills to renegotiate their relationship to the town

council, or *cabildo*. For Yannakakis, the case of the cacique Miguel Fernández de Chaves, which she studies in detail, shows that pre-Hispanic “hereditary nobility may have disappeared in its old form, but that those caciques with the requisite cultural skills persisted as a new kind of elite by adapting to a political order in which their sources of power were culturally hybrid, rather than ‘indigenous’ or ‘Iberian’” (155).

Yannakakis’s cultural and political history of Indian colonial subjects ends by exploring how native intermediaries shaped the impact of the Bourbon reforms, which, beginning in 1763, intended a centralization that threatened their gains in autonomy. Bourbon hostility toward native languages and local customs amounted to yet another wave of symbolic warfare by the state. The Indian allies rewarded with exemptions from tribute for their fidelity had the most to lose. Indian intermediaries—sacristans, *cabildo* officers, legal agents—saw their social and political spaces constrained by the Bourbon reforms, whose new racio-hierarchical categories did not distinguish between historically and performatively constituted differences. This leveling of Indians with the elimination of their purchase on power, Yannakakis contends, helped loosen their relationships to the Crown and speeded the processes that led to the wars of independence. Yannakakis remarks that, as her book was going to press, the people of Oaxaca are “suffering through another period of intense turmoil” (227), thereby stretching the import of her study into the present. Her story of two colonial rebellions in Oaxaca acquires particular relevance for the ongoing Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas and the politics of Indian agency in various Latin American nation-states.

I close this review by considering *Invasion and Transformation*, an interdisciplinary collection that nevertheless achieves an unusual level of coherence, perhaps because all of its essays deal with paintings, maps, and other artifacts selected for the 2003 exhibit “Visions of Empire,” which featured seventeenth-century paintings of the conquest of Mexico from the Jay I. Kislak collection. The anthropologists, art historians, and literary critics in this volume insightfully engage the relationship between painterly narrative and state sponsorship, examining glorifications of Hernán Cortés and the portrayal of Moctezuma as pusillanimous (“of a small soul,” in Latin), how indigenous subjects negotiated the story of Moctezuma and omens about the imminent demise of Aztec rule, and other aspects of the trauma of conquest and evangelization depicted in mestizo art.

Knowledge of indigenous languages always makes for stunning contributions to colonial studies. A case in point is the puzzling Spanish depiction of Moctezuma as a timid and cowardly man, only too anxious to convey his empire to the king of Spain, despite the fact that his name means “angry lord” in Nahuatl (3). We have to wonder how this elemental fact escaped so many until Susan D. Gillespie brought it to light in her careful

study of the sources (by Bernardino de Sahagún and others) that constructed it. Gillespie addresses the force that Cortés's version of events has had, observing that, "despite the evidentiary shortcomings, every popular and almost every scholarly account of the Conquest accepts that these narratives have a degree of historical veracity" (31). This is because of, Gillespie argues, the persistence of a positivist, literal-minded "approach in Western history, despite the fact that this mind-set has been under attack within the discipline since the 1930s. The positivist school assumes that historical events exist pre-formed within documents and merely have to be extracted through historians' methods of critical analysis" (32).

As does Gillespie's essay, *Invasion and Transformation* in general emphasizes the problem of representation, the failings of cross-cultural communication, and the transformative dynamics of conquest and coloniality. A case in point is Restall's "The Spanish Creation of the Conquest of Mexico," which shows how baroque painting coincided with imperial Spain's liking for battle scenes that displayed the horse as an invincible war machine. The Spanish hero on horseback was at his best in depictions of Cortés trampling frightened Indians. Restall discusses how, by 1600, there appeared a consistent narrative, or "mythistory" (a term Dennis Tedlock coined<sup>8</sup>), a "vision of the historical past heavily infused with misconceptions and partisan interpretations so deeply rooted as to constitute legend or myth" (94). Histories sponsored and published by the Crown perpetuated this vision of the conquest of Mexico, Restall adds. As each history drew on the preceding, a consolidated and unassailable narrative emerged. In 1661, Antonio de Solís became royal chronicler and subsequently published his *Historia de la conquista de México* (1684). This officially authorized book distilled more than one hundred years' worth of repetitions of Cortés's apotheosis, becoming a textual matrix for the mythistory of eight paintings about Spain's victory at Tenochtitlán. Schreffler also inquires into the various ways that paintings and their iconographic systems reflect imperial historiography and an ideological debt to Solís.

Other scholars in this volume ask why there was official interest in sponsoring depictions of Mexico's conquest at the end of the seventeenth century. In closing this review, it is important to point out that this question is relevant to nearly all of the texts, maps, exhibits, and voyages of exploration analyzed in the books under review. The answer seems to lie in the political fears and anxieties of imperial crowns engaged in conquering and governing other peoples. By 1680, Spain was in the midst of a profound political and economic crisis underscored and indeed epitomized by the physical and mental weakness of Carlos II. A similar anxiety gripped France as it sought to harness the world's wealth a century

8. *Popul Vuh: The Definitive Edition of the Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life and the Glories of Gods and Kings*, trans. and ed. Dennis Tedlock (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 64.

later, as Safier discusses. The same was true of the Creoles who used the Amerindian past to ground their new nations. In each case, there was an exacerbation of the feelings that permeate and color the relationships of Europeans and Amerindians in the space of coloniality. The books under review offer systematic and detailed accounts of important episodes in the dynamics of the rise and fall of European empires and thus in the making of modernity. In this sense, they are relevant to many ongoing discussions on empire and its colonial underside.