
REVIEW ESSAYS

AMBIVALENT IDENTITIES Catholicism, the Arts, and Religious Foundations in Spanish America

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Untold Sisters: Hispanic Nuns in Their Own Works. Edited by Electa Arenal and Stacey Schlauf. Revised ed. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010. Pp. xvii + 460. \$35.00 paper. ISBN: 9780826347381.

Indigenous Writings from the Convent: Negotiating Ethnic Autonomy in Colonial Mexico. By Mónica Díaz. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010. Pp. xii + 229. \$50.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780816528530.

Maya Christians and Their Churches in Sixteenth-Century Belize. By Elizabeth Graham. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011. Pp. xviii + 434. \$79.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780813036663.

Contested Visions in the Spanish Colonial World. Edited by Ilona Katzew. Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011. Pp. 320. \$70.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780300176643.

The Very Nature of God: Baroque Catholicism and Religious Reform in Bourbon Mexico City. By Brian R. Larkin. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010. Pp. xiii + 312. \$27.95 paper. ISBN: 9780826348340.

Building Colonial Cities of God: Mendicant Orders and Urban Culture in New Spain. By Karen Melvin. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012. Pp. 384. \$65.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780804774864.

A companion review essay will appear in a later issue.

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Framing the Sacred: The Indian Churches of Early Colonial Mexico. By Eleanor Wake. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010. Pp. xxi + 338. \$65.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780806140339.

English-language studies of colonial Latin American religious and artistic culture have undergone a sea change in the past two decades. Departing from the binary model of a society cleft into monolithic Euro-American and Amerindian moieties, they acknowledge considerable cultural and ethnic diversity on both sides of the divide, as well as the ensuing complexities of self-identity and belief. We now recognize that aboriginal groups, particularly elites, embraced aspects of colonialism to advance lineage claims and that these pedigrees were more localized than had been assumed—less Aztec or Inca than Purépecha, Chichimec, or Chachapoya. In participating in outward expressions of colonial harmony such as the *entrada* (investiture) processions of viceroys or the Corpus Christi festivities of Cuzco, these aboriginal groups forged a Machiavellian alliance with Creole society (people of European ancestry born in America) that simultaneously proclaimed Spanish and Christian triumph and advertised the legitimacy and cultural pride of indigenous peoples. We are also learning more about social divisions within ethnicities. Communities including Amerindians were further riven by class or what was then called *calidad*, a term that embraces bloodlines and occupation and invalidates our nineteenth- and twentieth-century use of the concept of race as an interpretive tool. Most notable is a growing abandonment of the notion that Native American Christianity (at least after the contact period) was a half-understood veneer over indigenous beliefs—the “idols behind altars” theory. Instead, scholars are revealing an ambivalent, constantly shifting interaction between different brands of Christianity (repressive or utopian, Franciscan or Jesuit) and a spectrum of diverse, locally based faiths that were not pure survivals from an idealized pre-Hispanic past but instead living, adapting entities.

These developments, which follow recent scholarship from Latin America, partly reflect a shift from studies of the contact period—an era of cataclysmic change and drama for which binary concepts of conflict and convergence were easier to argue—to others of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In this later period, social groups settled into an imperfect yet reciprocal and usually peaceful working relationship, particularly in cities. The variety of ethnicities also multiplied with an increasing influx of Africans, Filipinos, and other Asians, and a significant growth of mixed-race *castas*, famously and obsessively documented in painted taxonomies. This does not make for as exciting a story because it does not fit the traditional idea of a heroic battle between the familiar and the “other,” an idea again popularized in the mid-nineteenth century by the conquest histories of William Prescott (1796–1859). Thanks in part to Prescott, a disinclination to study the compromises of later viceregal culture has particularly affected English-language writers.

The eighteenth century is challenging—and fascinating—precisely because it provides no easy solutions to issues of ethnicity, gender, and faith. A groundswell of new studies about Bourbon America has risen to the occasion, investigating

the impact of the invasive reforms of monarchs such as Charles III (1759–1788). Intense colonial resistance to Spain's campaign to modernize the viceregal church and subject it to the authority of the crown highlights a reality that makes some scholars uncomfortable: indigenous groups had embraced the Habsburg-era colonial church as an essential part of their self-identity. As the Peruvian scholar Scarlett O'Phelan famously noted,¹ even the rebel leader Tupac Amaru II (1742–1781) was sympathetic to Catholicism, and he and other protagonists in the Andean rebellions of the 1780s peppered their proclamations with biblical quotations, allied themselves with priests, and fought under the patronage of saints. For aboriginals, the least popular reforms were the expulsion of the Society of Jesus in 1767, with which they had forged a close relationship, and especially the curtailment of confraternities. Both were seen as a draconian restriction of Amerindian forms of devotion. The confraternity was a critical manifestation of Native American identity through its patronage of processions and works of art. Pioneering English-language studies such as Kenneth Mills's *Idolatry and Its Enemies* (1997) and Sergei Serulnikov's *Subverting Colonial Authority* (2003) have tried to make sense of this seeming paradox, and it is a major concern of several of the books under review here.²

These new studies focus on monastic and ecclesiastical culture, looking at conflicting understandings of the self and vital questions such as what it meant to be Christian in viceregal society. Brian Larkin's *The Very Nature of God* uses wills and other texts to seek the essence of Catholicism in Bourbon New Spain. Concentrating on whites, he reassesses the evolution, between 1696 and 1813, from what he calls "baroque Catholicism" or "a religion of outward gesture and religious observance" (4) to the reformist approaches of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when older traditions nevertheless persisted. Larkin follows in the line of William Taylor's work on the dynamics of faith and ethnicity at the parish level,³ and especially in that of Pamela Voekel, who traced the ties between "enlightened Catholicism" and the rise of liberalism.⁴ Larkin also contributes to a wider literature on viceregal confraternities, complementing Ricardo González's study of confraternity patronage in the chapels and retables of Buenos Aires and Charlotte de Castelnau-L'Estoile on confraternities, marriage, and ethnicity in Ouro Preto and Rio de Janeiro.⁵ As does Larkin, the latter base their research on wills.

Larkin notes a trend away from opulence to humility, and from patronage of

1. Scarlett O'Phelan, *La gran rebelión en los Andes* (Cuzco: Centro de Estudios Regionales Andinos Bartolomé de Las Casas, 1995).

2. Kenneth Mills, *Idolatry and Its Enemies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); Sergei Serulnikov, *Subverting Colonial Authority* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

3. William Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred: Priests and Parishioners in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996).

4. Pamela Voekel, *Alone before God: The Religious Origins of Modernity in Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

5. Ricardo González, *Imágenes de la ciudad capital* (La Plata, Argentina: Editorial Minerva, 1998); Kathleen Higgins, "Licentious Liberty" in a Brazilian Gold-Mining Region (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999). Castelnau-L'Estoile's monograph has not yet been published, but some of her material on the marriages of slaves ("Laïcs et religieux face au mariage des esclaves dans le Brésil

chapels to donations to charities. He also documents a gradual decline in the belief in the divine presence, or what he calls “sacred immanence,” in sacred imagery. Perhaps more significant, communal forms of piety such as confraternities weakened. Influenced by the Enlightenment emphasis on the individual, groups in which “the self was porous, open to outside influence, and subsumed under a larger, collective identity” (96) no longer appealed. Baroque Catholicism has much to do with the arts, and Larkin devotes a chapter to this most visible manifestation of faith. Testators commissioned chapels and retables; paid for liturgical ornaments (altar cloths and tabernacle curtains); and donated paintings, furniture, and statues (with the full complement of costumes and jewelry) from their private oratories to the city’s churches. Larkin’s most notable revelation was the propensity to make gifts associated with the five senses—a very baroque idea going back to Ignatius of Loyola’s “composition of place,” among other sources; wills specifically provided for perfumes and incense, flowers, music, festive lights, and fireworks. Gifts to enhance the physical splendor of places of worship waned over the course of the eighteenth century as more people left money to the poor.

Larkin’s most important contribution is to complicate the received notion that Bourbon reforms decisively changed people’s habits or conceptions of the divine. Ultimately, as is often the case with top-down campaigns, the entreaties that reformist bishops made to the lower clergy and laity to interiorize their relationship with God and abandon more physical forms of piety had “limited success” (158), and the viceregal church became increasingly fragmented and schizophrenic. For this reason, it would have been beneficial had Larkin extended his scope to look at mestizos, aboriginals, and other castas to examine this conflicted Christianity across a wider spectrum of society.

Karen Melvin’s *Building Colonial Cities of God* takes us from the patronage and charity of individuals to the contributions that the five mendicant orders made to New Spain’s cities and towns. Over two centuries, mendicants became “deeply embedded in urban cultural and social life” (2), serving all social and ethnic groups—mestizos and Native Americans even joined friaries, though admittedly rarely—in a range of capacities, from confessors to teachers. It is astonishing that this is the first book in English on such an important subject. Mendicants are arguably the most studied protagonists in the colonization of New Spain, yet scholars have concentrated so much on the contact period and the utopian programs of actors such as Pedro de Gante (1480–1572) that it is as if they disappeared altogether following the secularization of rural parishes in the 1570s. Of course they did not, as their massive urban monastic complexes filled to the rafters with gilded retables attest. There were twenty mendicant churches in Mexico City alone in 1730, and, as in Europe, it was precisely in cities and towns where they remained key operators: “the orders that had come to New Spain for the purpose of converting Indians had become almost exclusively urban entities” (23). Melvin deliberately begins her study after the “golden age” of missions (24), when nearly all foundations moved to urban areas and new orders (Discalced Franciscans, Carmelites,

colonial”) was presented at the conference “Laïcs et évangélisation en Europe et aux Amériques, XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles” at the Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense, March 29–30, 2012, Nanterre, France.

and Mercedarians) joined the more familiar Franciscans, Dominicans, and Augustinians. This era of extraordinary growth—at least until the Bourbon reforms of the 1730s—facilitated what Melvin calls “the spiritual consolidation of Mexico” (267). Her book is a welcome balance to the outpouring of studies on Jesuits in Latin America over the past two decades.⁶

Melvin’s is not a traditional institutional history, in that it concentrates on the interaction of mendicants with society. Yet it clearly spells out the corporate identity or “way of proceeding” of each order to avoid the naive view that all mendicants were basically the same, especially when contrasted with Jesuits. It also shows how these distinctions directly affected individual experiences of faith and ritual in festivities such as the Discalced Carmelites’ celebration of the canonization of St. John of the Cross in 1726. Their use of fireworks, processions, and a fire-breathing dragon illustrates how embedded mendicants were in the geography of cities. Franciscans directed their energies more to working with the poor, whereas Dominicans emphasized preaching and Augustinians, education. Different orders favored different devotions, sometimes fighting over them as in rival Franciscan and Carmelite claims to the Virgin Immaculate in Tacuba, or sharing or combining them as in a bizarre eighteenth-century print of a friar whose right half belongs to St. Francis and left half to St. Dominic. Melvin also notes, in what has become a growing theme in colonial studies, that rivalries among orders tended to play out on a local and not institutional level: “disputes were fundamentally about protecting the orders’ places in their communities” (198). And there were not just antagonisms either: throughout the book, we see Franciscans siding with Augustinians, and even mendicants with Jesuits, again largely in relation to local issues such as conflicts with individual bishops or parish priests. Similarly, Melvin corrects the popular notion of rivalry between seculars and regulars, noting that “secular clergy typically welcomed friars’ contributions to cities” (19). Even mendicants and reformers agreed on the foundation of urban missions to battle immoral public activities such as, amusingly, “disgraceful public bathing done with music and picnics” (162).

Like Larkin, Melvin shows that the impact of the Bourbon reforms was piecemeal. Even though decrees of 1749 and 1753 compelled mendicant orders to hand their *doctrinas* over to secular clergy and the crown increasingly interfered in their governance, their role in cities “remained largely intact” (7). Melvin’s baroque piety (like Larkin’s baroque Catholicism), with its emphasis on ritual and emotional engagement, persisted into the nineteenth century, despite stiff competition from state institutions and calls to modernize by local bishops. She also shows that episcopal-mendicant strife was not limited to the Bourbon era through her discussion of the intense antagonism of all but the Carmelite order toward Puebla’s Bishop Palafox y Mendoza (1600–1659), who, among other things, secularized thirty-six mendicant *doctrinas*. *Colonial Cities of God* is engagingly and elegantly

6. Most recently by Guillermo Wilde (*Religión y poder en las misiones de Guaraníes* [Buenos Aires: Ediciones SB, 2009]) and Alexandre Coello de la Rosa (*El pregonero de Dios: Diego Martínez, SJ, misionero jesuita del Perú colonial (1543–1626)* [Valladolid, Spain: Universidad de Valladolid, 2010]), on Paraguay and Peru, respectively.

written, refreshingly free of the academic jargon and devout references to Michel Foucault that mark some of the other books under discussion here.

Studies of convent life are also benefiting from new attention to the eighteenth century because, although nunneries existed as early as 1540 in Mexico City, most were founded much later, particularly in cities such as Buenos Aires that grew extensively during the Bourbon era.⁷ The primary focus of convent studies has been New Spain, with publications by Kirsten Hammer, Margaret Chowning, Stephanie Kirk, and Elizabeth Perry⁸—although Kathryn Burns deals with Cuzco.⁹ Nunneries mirror the ethnic, class, and gender complexities of society at large and were intimately linked with aboriginal communities through educational activities, the presence of Amerindian servants in convents, and nunneries reserved for aboriginal nobles. The latter were first studied by Josephina Muriel in *Las indias caciques de Corpus Christi* (1963).¹⁰ Convents have also inspired interest among art historians thanks to their unique art forms such as the paintings of crowned nuns made when a girl entered the order, *escudos* with painted or embroidered images of saints worn on habits,¹¹ and other aspects of costume. The primary interest of scholars has been Creole society, although a recent study traces the floral trappings of crowned nuns' portraits in New Spain to indigenous forms.¹²

Electa Arenal and Stacey Schlauf's compilation of writings by nuns in Spain, New Spain, and Peru from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries was a revelation when it was first published in 1989. By allowing a group popularly thought of as silent to speak—albeit usually through the mediation of confessors or chroniclers—it gave invaluable insight into the social realities and flourishing intellectual culture of convents to balance what was known about male foundations. It also provided a way to contextualize the careers of more celebrated nuns such as Teresa de Ávila (1515–1582) and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651–1695), and it showed that nuns kept abreast of the latest currents in literature and theology. Thanks to comprehensive introductions provided for each nun or group of nuns, these women appear as individuals: we meet poets, playwrights, musicians, mystics, and scholars; rich and poor; Spaniards, Creoles, and Native Americans; Carmelites and Augustinians. Some entered convents with substantial dowries from

7. See Alicia Fraschina, *Mujeres consagradas en Buenos Aires colonial* (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 2010).

8. Kirsten Hammer, "Monjas coronadas: The Crowned Nuns of Viceroyal Mexico," in *Retratos: 2,000 Years of Latin American Portraits*, ed. Elizabeth Benson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 86–101; Margaret Chowning, *Rebellious Nuns: The Troubled History of a Mexican Convent* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Stephanie Kirk, *Convent Life in Colonial Mexico: A Tale of Two Communities* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007); Elizabeth Perry, "Convents, Art, and Creole Identity in Late Viceroyal New Spain," in *Women and Art in Early Modern Latin America*, ed. Kellen Kee McIntyre and Richard E. Phillips (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 321–337.

9. Kathryn Burns, *Colonial Habits* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).

10. Josephina Muriel, *Las indias caciques de Corpus Christi* (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma de México, 1963).

11. Asunción Lavrin, *Brides of Christ* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008); Alma Montero, *Monjas coronadas* (Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2008); Sara Gabriela Baz, ed., *Monjas coronadas* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia and Museo Nacional del Virreinato, 2003).

12. James M Córdova, "Clad in Flowers: Indigenous Arts and Knowledge in Colonial Mexican Convents," *Art Bulletin* 93, no. 4 (2011): 449–467.

their wealthy families, whereas others went there to escape poverty and family abuse: for both groups, convents provided a space where women could operate with relative freedom. Among the most moving examples, the Spanish “peasant nun” Madre Isabel de Jesús (1586–1648) sought consolation from her harsh life through visions of Christ the Shepherd and horned devils, an experience dictated in straightforward, vernacular language. Interestingly, the authors suggest that paintings and sculptures “served as Madre Isabel’s visionary medium through which to develop stylistic analogies” (193). Her tale nearly ran her afoul of fellow nuns and church officials suspicious of a mystic who lacked education and began life as a shepherdess. Particularly fascinating is the biography of María Magdalena de Jesús, which relates that her father organized a procession featuring aboriginal men dressed as Chichimec warriors, complete with bows and arrows, to celebrate her entry into the indigenous convent of Corpus Christi in Mexico City. Like Andean participants in the Corpus Christi processions of Cuzco, María Magdalena’s father was at once celebrating his ancestors’ acquiescence to Catholicism and his own aristocratic lineage, what the biography terms “his nobility and estate” (391).

Mónica Díaz’s *Indigenous Writings from the Convent* focuses on three communities of aboriginal nuns in New Spain: the Corpus Christi convent in Mexico City—founded in 1724, it was the first—and others in Antequera (now Oaxaca) and Valladolid (Morelia). Although some of her sources were published before, notably the collective biography of seven indigenous nuns noted above, Díaz introduces new material, from sermons and hagiographies to testimonies and letters. The latter, which she divides between “quotidian” and “confessional” texts, are the least mediated sources, although Díaz stresses that they still fall within “the dynamic of control exercised within the ecclesiastical hierarchy” (152). New Spain’s three indigenous convents ran counter to what one might expect from institutions made up of Amerindians. Not only did they require that nuns be from the ranks of caciques or nobles; they even instituted a paradoxical rule of *limpieza de sangre*, not to prevent the entry of heretics, Jews, or nonwhites, as elsewhere in the Spanish Empire, but to keep out Spanish and Creole novices, whom they felt were ruining the aboriginal purity of the convent. Indeed, most frictions took place along ethnic lines—many of the first abbesses were of European descent—and the separateness indigenous nuns sought reflects the larger division between the *república de indios* and the *república de españoles* that cleaved viceregal cities into two spheres. Aboriginal nuns may have enjoyed a certain freedom, but they were compelled to promote themselves as paragons of faith and humility, and as typically “poor Indian women” (179), in the words of one letter of 1743, to meet the ethnic expectations of Creole society. At the same time, they asserted their nobility by referring back to distinguished pre-Hispanic ancestors in the *informaciones* written upon entry into the convent. This emphasis on nobility should serve as another reminder that eighteenth-century viceregal society was not just about race in the modern sense of the word but also about *calidad*.

In contrast to trends in church and social history, an increasing divide separates US-UK and Latin American approaches to art and architectural history. The most obvious difference is geographic. Most scholars in the United States and the

United Kingdom concentrate on New Spain and Peru; in fact, their focus is so narrow that studies of Peru do not go much beyond Cuzco. There are exceptions such as Andrea Lepage's fascinating study of the Colegio de San Andrés in Quito,¹³ which investigates the increasing participation of indigenous artists in their own education and their ability to communicate aboriginal concerns in European-style works, even by manipulating contracts to prevent charges of heresy. In contrast, although studies of New Spain and Peru admittedly also dominate scholarship from Latin America, there is a rich and growing literature on the arts of Central America, New Granada, and the Southern Cone,¹⁴ not to mention a resurgence of interest in Brazil's colonial arts and architecture. The latter is perhaps best encapsulated in Myriam Ribeiro's magisterial *O rococó religioso no Brasil* (2003),¹⁵ one of the best books on the rococo in any language. Although these studies rarely cross national borders, they at least evince a comprehensive and ever subtler understanding of the arts of regions that remain off the Anglo-Saxon radar.

The other difference is of methodology and subject. Scholars of the arts in the United States and the United Kingdom not only prioritize material objects that reflect what they hold to be indigenous styles, iconographies, and self-representation but also favor an anthropological and postcolonial approach that further entrenches interest in objects displaying aboriginal content. Examples include colonial Inca portraits and paintings of Cuzco's Corpus Christi processions, paintings of the Virgin Mary that recall the Andean deity Pachamama, Nahua codices, casta paintings, *keros*, *lienzos*, and early colonial mission complexes in New Spain¹⁶—a perennially popular subject since the book by Manuel Toussaint in 1948.¹⁷ These subjects are fascinating precisely because they are the most overt examples of intercultural negotiation, and I have examined similar interactions in the arts of Paraguay and Southern Peru and Bolivia.¹⁸ It is nevertheless problematic that

13. Andrea Lepage, *The Art of Evangelization* (forthcoming).

14. On Central America, see *El país del quetzal: Guatemala maya e hispana* (Madrid: Sociedad Estatal para la Acción Cultural Exterior, 2002). On New Granada, see Alexandra Kennedy, ed., *Arte de la Real Audiencia de Quito* (Quito: Editorial Nerea, 2002); Constanza Toquica, ed., *El oficio del pintor: Nuevas miradas a la obra de Gregorio Vázquez* (Bogotá: Ministerio de Cultura, 2008). On the Southern Cone, see Ricardo González, *Imágenes de dos mundos: La imaginaria cristiana en la Puna de Jujuy* (Buenos Aires: Fundación Espigas, 2003); Fernando Guzmán, *Representaciones del paraíso: Retablos en Chile* (Santiago: Universitaria, 2009); Bozidar Darko Sustersic, *Imágenes guaraní-jesuíticas* (Asunción: Centro de Artes Visuales and Museo del Barro, 2010).

15. Myriam Ribeiro, *O rococó religioso no Brasil* (São Paulo: Cosac & Naify, 2003).

16. Corpus Christi: Carolyn Dean, *Inka Bodies and the Body of Christ* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); paintings of the Virgin Mary: Carol Damian, *The Virgin of the Andes* (Miami Beach, FL: Grassfield Press, 1995); Nahua codices: Elizabeth Hill Boone, *Stories in Red and Black* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000); casta paintings: Magali Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003); Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004); keros: Thomas Cummins, *Toasts with the Inca* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002); lienzos: Barbara Mundy, *The Mapping of New Spain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

17. Treated most recently by Samuel Edgerton, *Theaters of Conversion* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001); Jaime Lara, *City, Temple, Stage* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004).

18. Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *The Andean Hybrid Baroque: Convergent Cultures in the Churches of Colonial Peru* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010).

scholarship has not widened its scope, and some objects turn up so repeatedly in monographs, exhibition catalogs, PhD dissertations, and conference papers that I fear that we are getting ourselves into a rut.

The preference for art forms that reflect Native American cultures has also led us away from a more balanced, comprehensive view of viceregal art that encompasses Creole society and urban areas, precisely the subjects increasingly under consideration by historians on both sides of the Rio Grande and by Latin American historians of art. The latter treat such topics as the role of the arts in confraternities; the development of the retablo, drawings, and workshop practice; the impact of nature and landscape on the arts; the influence of preaching on mural painting; and the symbolic value of colors, to name a few. They also tend to do a better job in collating the arts of the Americas with trends in Europe, something underplayed in much English-language scholarship (the work of Jonathan Brown is an exception).¹⁹ And they are the only scholars now producing monographs on single artists, whether Cristóbal de Villalpando, Juan Correa, and José Juárez in New Spain, or the Figueroa brothers in Colombia (an exception is *Matteo da Leccia*, by Italian scholars Antonio Palesati and Nicoletta Lepri).²⁰ Ironically, things used to be the other way around. In the 1940s and 1950s, US scholars such as George Kubler and Alfred Neumeyer bent over backward to insist on the European origin of colonial architectural forms, whereas Latin Americans such as José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert teased out intriguing links to aboriginal practices (Gisbert continues to do so in provocative new iconographic studies on Alto Peru). For all that most of us would prefer it to be otherwise, viceregal culture was primarily European in origin, developed primarily by Creoles and mestizos. By marginalizing mainstream colonial art and architecture, Anglophone writers run the risk of marginalizing ourselves.

Self-identity and the cultural continuity of Native Americans are in the spotlight in three new works of art history, two on sixteenth-century mendicant missions in New Spain and Central America, and one a collection of essays on indigenous culture in the arts of New Spain and Peru. Eleanor Wake's *Framing the Sacred* is a curious book: it is quite innovative at the core, yet its survey of historical context and extant literature seems out of date. The discussion of Nahua contributions to colonial culture reads as if the Hispanist-indigenist battles of the 1940s–1960s were still being fought today, and the chapters on friars and their building campaigns are little more than a bibliographic review. Nevertheless, the connection between indigenous depictions of churches and imagery of the *altepetl* (Nahua communal unit) is useful. The most impressive part of the book reveals that the pre-Hispanic stones frequently embedded in colonial churches align with the trajectory of the sun and radial sightlines tied to the sacred landscape of native culture, notably mountains. Also groundbreaking is the recognition that a

19. For example, see Jonathan Brown, "Spanish Painting and New Spanish Painting," in *Painting a New World: Mexican Art and Life, 1521–1821*, ed. Donna Pierce et al. (Denver: Denver Art Museum; Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).

20. Antonio Palesati and Nicoletta Lepri, *Matteo da Leccia: Manierista toscano dall'Europa al Perù* (Foligno, Italy: Editoriale Umbra, 1999).

localized sacred geography at times serves as the background of Christian mural paintings. For example, the famous portrait of patrons in the stairwell mural (ca. 1574) at Actopan clearly includes a pair of mountain crags called Cerro los Frailes in the upper-left-hand corner. A fascinating leitmotif throughout the book is the ubiquity of floral motifs in carvings and paintings in early monastic complexes. Wake links these to flower imagery in the Nahuatl *Cantares mexicanos* (sacred songs), yet I wish that she had provided some of these splendid texts in full at the beginning of the book, before making her argument, rather than discussing them in the conclusion.

Elizabeth Graham's *Maya Christians and Their Churches in Sixteenth-Century Belize* is one of the most peculiar—and intriguing—books on early-contact mission churches I have read. Instead of focusing on the Valley of Mexico, Oaxaca, or the Yucatán, Graham takes us to the “back of beyond,” an in-between place somewhere between Yucatán and the kingdom of Guatemala that never really had a name in colonial times. Instead of observing her subject through the lens of church history, art history, or cultural studies, she uses archaeological fieldwork to bring to life the churches and communities of Laménai and Tipu, two of the tiniest and most forgotten places in Spanish America. Like Matthew Restall,²¹ Graham sensibly dismisses the idea that the Maya had an incomplete knowledge of Christian tenets by showing how they incorporated Catholicism and the cult of saints into their own faith and civic identity, and continued to perform Christian burials long after the mission churches in question were abandoned: “my assumption is that the Maya were as proactive as the Spaniards in the intellectual and spiritual development of the Christian faith” (154). Refreshingly, Graham also takes to task the persistent habit of going back to Toussaint and John McAndrew to call nearly every subsidiary place of worship in a mission complex an open chapel.²² In the Maya context, scholars have used this term to refer to the *ramada* form of church used at Laménai and Tipu, an open, thatched structure at times attached as a nave to a stone presbytery. Explaining that the term *open chapel* “has stuck like a limpet to such a wide variety of phenomena that it has become meaningless” (172), Wake points out that archaeology does not even prove whether ramadas had open sides and that Belize’s nine months of blowing rain makes it very unlikely.

In viceregal times no one used the term *capilla abierta*, only *capilla de indios* or *capilla de naturales*. Graham makes a valiant attempt to define ecclesiastical structures using colonial-era nomenclature, maintaining that only *iglesia* and not *capilla* should be used for a structure intended to serve the whole community (as at Laménai and Tipu), and that *capillas de indios* were therefore, by definition, subordinate structures (186). The problem with such attempts at precision is that these terms were not used systematically in their day: for example, in a famous description of the Jesuit itinerant missions in Chilean Patagonia (1767), Father

21. Matthew Restall, *The Maya World* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997).

22. John McAndrew, *The Open-Air Churches of Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).

Segismundo Guell used the terms *capilla* and *iglesia* interchangeably to refer to tiny churches on outlying islands.²³

Another aspect of Graham's approach is at once refreshing and problematic, likely to incite spirited backlash. Taking aim at Michel Foucault's and Gilles Deleuze's old chestnut about not being able to look through the eyes of the "other," she uses her own experience as a Roman Catholic Italian American to try to understand what Spanish and Maya Christians were thinking in the sixteenth century, following the feminist-inspired principle that objectivity requires subjectivity (16). Although I admire her pluck, I do not always find this approach enlightening, notably the digressions about Sunday-school classes in New Jersey, the church of "St. Mike's," and the Baltimore Catechism. Nevertheless, I wholeheartedly support Graham's right, as a seasoned scholar, to make a reasoned guess.

Ambiguous identities and mutable Christianities dominate the eleven essays of *Contested Visions*, which accompanied an eponymous exhibition of vice-regal art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (November 2011–January 2012). Disappointingly, this volume is not a catalog, so readers have no way of knowing what objects were displayed. Despite four essays by non-Anglophone scholars, *Contested Visions* demonstrates the rift between US and Latin American approaches to colonial art, especially when juxtaposed to the roughly contemporaneous four-volume catalog and show called *Pintura de los reinos: Identidades compartidas*. This event, held in Madrid and Mexico City (2010–2011), was organized by a team of mainly Latin American scholars under Juana Gutiérrez Haces and taken over by Jonathan Brown after Gutiérrez's death in 2007. The titles of the two shows say it all: *Contested Visions* focuses on the conflictive interaction of Amerindians and Spanish Creoles, whereas *Identidades compartidas* (or *Shared Identities* in English) celebrates commonalities, specifically the Spanish Crown as a catalyst for the spread of European painting throughout the Americas, where it inspired vernacular forms of a common language. Although limited primarily to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and appearing at times dangerously close to a celebration of Spanish suzerainty, the catalogs of *Identidades compartidas* encompass a much wider range of viceregal arts, including works from Brazil and New Granada (although the exhibition itself focused mainly on New Spain, Cuzco, and Lima), with paintings by Europeans, Creoles, mestizos, and Amerindians—many of whom are underrepresented in scholarly literature. They also do an extraordinary job of collating Latin American painting with currents in Italy, Flanders, and Spain.

Identidades compartidas is an exhibition of paintings, whereas *Contested Visions* looks as much at art forms outside the traditional categorization of high art such as lienzos, codices, silver, feather mosaics, and textiles. The viewpoint of *Identidades compartidas* is primarily from Europe; that of *Contested Visions* is firmly on this side of the Atlantic, concentrating on how Native Americans were represented

23. Cited in Walter Hanisch, *La Isla de Chiloé, capitana de rutas australes* (Santiago: Academia Superior de Ciencias Pedagógicas, 1982), 249.

and represented themselves to highlight issues of status, faith, and lineage. Kevin Terraciano's compelling comparison of how the Conquest of Mexico was depicted by Native Americans and Spanish Creoles juxtaposes paintings from early codices with seventeenth-century *biombos* (folding screens) and portraits of Aztec rulers. His most important revelation is how localized indigenous identity was: aboriginal depictions of the Conquest did not represent the view of a collective Aztec state but instead tended to embody the viewpoints of single altepetls. As a result, the understandings of different groups of Native Americans could be quite divergent (Cecilia Klein makes the same point in her chapter on Aztec and Inca art). By contrast, Spanish-Creole *biombos* presented an "official story": a peaceful transition of power made possible by accepting, docile, and monolithic Amerindians.

Eduardo de Jesús Douglas and Mónica Domínguez Torres deal with the often-convoluted painted heraldries and genealogies that indigenous elites commissioned to claim noble status on the basis of their pre-Hispanic ancestors. Domínguez Torres returns to her work on coats of arms in New Spain and Peru to show how elites fashioned intriguing combinations of European shields and supports with symbols taken directly from Nahua picture writing and Inca regalia to advertise their social rank in European terms. Douglas presents some of the most extraordinary images in the book: the *Genealogical Tree of the Royal Line of Texcoco* (1750) on parchment and the Techialoyan manuscripts (mid-seventeenth to early eighteenth century) on traditional *amate* paper. These works are remarkable, not only because they were produced so much later than the better-known codices but also because they employ deliberately archaizing, pre-Hispanic materials. The Techialoyan sheets also use symbols and formats taken from Mesoamerican picture writing. Like the Corpus Christi nuns of Díaz's study, these works depict the Amerindian petitioners who commissioned them as stereotypes to get what they wanted: shown as humble and poor, with accoutrements such as bows and arrows, they proclaimed that all-important noble status coveted by Amerindians on both continents.

The image of the Amerindian as an exemplary Christian is treated in more detail by Luisa Elena Alcalá. To counter negative stereotypes and win prestige, Amerindians had themselves depicted as devout Christians blessed with miracles, particularly from sacred images. These nearly ubiquitous statues and paintings were extremely localized in their points of reference and became potent yet non-threatening symbols of communal identity. Alcalá shows Native Americans portrayed as donors or devout followers, often in religious processions, in works commissioned not by Creole patrons keen to demonstrate Amerindian acquiescence but by indigenous communities themselves: "The Indians of Spanish America were tremendously active as patrons, making small and large donations to maintain chapels and festivities for the cult images of their local churches throughout their lifetimes (and sometimes beyond, through bequests)" (230). Like the negotiated Christianities explored by Mills and Restall, these patrons integrated Christian and indigenous identities to maintain their status within colonial society. Elitism and painting come together in Luis Eduardo Wuffarden's chapter on An-

dean artists in colonial Peru, which shows a decline in elite artists over the course of the eighteenth century as Bourbon reforms made it possible for Amerindians to gain loftier status in the church—eventually even as priests—and as painting, formerly considered an elite activity (signed paintings before the eighteenth century were usually by nobles), was left to members of the lower castes such as the mestizos Basilio Pacheco and Marcos Zapata. This chapter is extremely useful also as a methodical chronology of stylistic development in Cuzco painting in the later colonial era.

The richest chapter in *Contested Visions* is by Peruvian scholar Ramón Mujica, one of the most original scholars working on religious imagery in colonial Peru today. Like Wuffarden, Mujica contributed to both the Los Angeles and Madrid exhibitions. As in his *Ángeles apócrifos en la América virreinal* (1996) and *Rosa Limensis* (2001), Mujica unearths unknown and fantastically interesting paintings from some of the nineteen churches in Peru and Alto Peru with depictions of the last four things (death, judgment, hell, heaven)—these works were identified by Teresa Gisbert and Andrés de Mesa Gisbert—to show how indigenous and mestizo artists did not always get the message intended by fire-and-brimstone Catholic priests. Purgatory was a particularly touchy topic, as Andeans used it as an opportunity for ancestor worship; confraternities devoted to souls in purgatory were consequently popular. As in the paintings discussed by Alcalá, depictions of the Last Judgment show Andeans as submissive and pious Christians, even though, ironically, the representation of Inca costume led to crackdowns, particularly after the rebellions of 1780–1781, by Spanish authorities eager “to destroy every remnant of Inca visual culture kept by the native aristocracy and to abolish Inca nobility in its entirety” (194). One of the ways that Andeans gave themselves status in these images was by juxtaposing their devoutness to the wickedness or hypocrisy of whites, as depicted in two splendid eighteenth-century paintings: an *Allegory of the Cleansing of the Temple*, which contrasts a trio of quietly praying indigenous women with a cacophony of gossiping Creoles—whose words literally spill out of their mouths—and an *Allegory of the Church*, in which an angel leads a humble Andean woman by the hand toward Christ and the Virgin while another throws a Jesuit into a boiling cauldron. Art does not get more subversive than that, yet it was perfectly acceptable within the ages-old European tradition of depicting churchmen among the damned.

In contrast to the chapters discussed above, the rest of *Contested Visions* returns to works that have become staple fare in conferences, exhibition catalogs, and collected essays since the 1990s: the Cuzco Corpus Christi series, castas, biombo, lienzos, codices, keros, the illustrations by Guaman Poma de Ayala, feather mosaics, and Inca and Aztec portraits. This is not to say that this material cannot be used in new ways, but we need to expand the scope of English-language scholarship, as colleagues in Latin America have begun to do. We need to plumb the incalculable amount of material still waiting in churches, museums, archives, and civic monuments, from Chiloé to Chihuahua, and we need to integrate better the colonial worlds of Spanish America and Brazil, and examine more closely the ties between Latin America and Europe. As Mujica, Alcalá, and Gisbert demon-

strate, there is still much Amerindian-related material to sink our teeth into, but it is also imperative that we look beyond—to the rich contributions by Creoles, mestizos, Asians, and African Americans that await in cities and towns—and seek a more balanced view of viceregal art and architecture in all its magnitude and complexity.