

veal the tacit critique of those administrators and exaltation of conquistadors in canto 3 of the “Discurso” (chapter 4). Finally, chapter 5 examines the apocryphal captivity tale of Juan de Salas. The story of Salas, whom Castellanos claims to have known personally but of whom there is no trace in the historical record, represents the conquest “as a redeeming act endorsed by God to save the Amerindians” (103) and carried out by idealized conquistador/*encomenderos*. As such, it rebuts Bartolomé de las Casas’s indictment of the *encomienda* system and provides an unwavering apology of conquest grounded in fervent—though unverifiable—assertions of Castellanos’s authority as a personal friend of the protagonist.

Through the painstaking analysis of historical sources, Martínez-Osorio both illustrates the lacunae in previous interpretations of the *Elegies* and celebrates the contributions of other scholars. Some passages in chapter 5 seem hastily edited due to a number of erratas and weak textual evidence, for instance: “The notion that the exploration and conquest of the New World confronted the forces of good against evil is first alluded to in the words used by Amerindians to characterize their assault as part of a much larger confrontation: ‘[. . .] but for him to surrender as a their [*sic*] captive / if he wanted to escape this war alive’” (111). Occasional editorial oversight notwithstanding, this book provides an exceptional example of how literary criticism can deepen our understanding of colonial history. As such, it offers an invaluable contribution to the field and will doubtless become a required reference for future considerations of colonial Latin American epic poetry.

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*Diálogos con Quetzalcóatl: Humanismo, etnografía y ciencia (1492–1577).*

Jaime Marroquín Arredondo.

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The aim of this book is to rescue and recognize the ethnographic contributions of humanists who were confronted with Mesoamerican culture after the discovery and conquest of the New World. The author analyzes works of humanists who settled in America in order to give an understanding of the origins of modern science.

The first chapter traces the genesis of Mexican humanism based on the methodology of natural history and the ethnography coming from Renaissance humanism. The work of Lorenzo Valla and the *studia humanitatis* are named as paradigmatic examples concerned with the renewal of grammar and rhetoric of classical antiquity. The humanists order, classify, name, and rationalize the New World’s nature through a rhetorical discourse. Within this framework, Marroquín Arredondo explains the forging

of a messianic, utopian, and scientific project promoted by the Spanish Crown. The second chapter deals with the relationship between utopian imagination and ethnographic history through the naming of reality and the insertion of American flora and fauna into ancient encyclopedic models such as Pliny's *Natural History*. The domain of utopian models characterized by instrumental rationality served to justify political and economic domination, as shown in the discourse of Christopher Columbus, Ramón Pané, and Pedro Mártir de Anglería. The third chapter describes the Spanish millenarian project detected in Hernán Cortés's *Cartas de relación*. The discourse is characterized by the use of rhetorical elements that focus on persuading others of the usefulness of American nature, elements that help to justify the colonization before the Spanish Crown.

The fourth chapter analyzes the work of Fray Pedro de Gante and Sebastián Ramírez de Fuenleal. Gante's promotion of the study of languages and translation of concepts for teaching the Catholic faith gives insight into the complexity and richness of Mesamerican thinking. Ramírez de Fuenleal's studies represent the first systematic accounts of the geographic, economic, and political reality of the land and their inhabitants. The fifth chapter deals with the work of Fray Toribio Benavente y Motolín and Fray Andrés de Olmos. Both Franciscans bring forward a project of modern ethnography through the understanding of otherness. They aim to build an indigenous Christian republic by studying and implementing Nahuatl grammar and rhetoric. The sixth chapter is devoted to an analysis of the ethnographic work of Bernardino de Sahagún. The author underlines the demystification of nature that drives the evolution of scientific epistemology in his work. At the same time, he emphasizes the encyclopedic view that gives an accurate account of the cultural and social organization of Mesoamerican people as well as their knowledge of natural and civil law. The seventh chapter is dedicated to the work of Francisco Hernández, who demystifies naturalistic knowledge through the elaboration of a systematic description of natural history as well as a synthesis of the therapeutic and medicinal therapies of the time.

Finally, the book aims to demonstrate how the modern method of ethnographic research has been forged by humanistic studies at the time of the discovery and colonization of the New World. This method of social research was used as an epistemological tool for the defense and preservation of Mesoamerican civilization within a framework of messianic and apologetic discourse of the Spanish Crown. During colonization, the author concludes, the obtaining of verifiable empirical evidence, as well as the predominance of a new instrumental rationality, were central elements of transition from a Scholastic epistemology to modern science.

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