

Anna More. *Baroque Sovereignty: Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora and the Creole Archive of Colonial Mexico*.

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Focusing on the Mexican Creole polymath Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora (1645–1700), Anna More offers a critical reevaluation of the Spanish-American Baroque during the seventeenth century. While past scholarship has employed terms such as Creole “identity,” “subjectivity,” and “agency,” More proposes the notion of “Baroque sovereignty” as an analytic framework for understanding the patriotic literary productions of seventeenth-century Creoles, the American-born colonial elite of European descent. She argues that, during the second half of the seventeenth century, the Creole elite in New Spain was engaged in the construction

of a literary archive that manifests a search for new grounds of local sovereignty that lay beyond the terms envisioned by Spanish imperialism. On the one hand, elite Creoles imagined themselves as heirs to a continuous genealogy of conquerors and indigenous nobility originating during the time of the conquest. On the other, they expressed an acute awareness of the fragmentation of a racially mixed colonial society that had developed in the urban centers of the viceroyalty of New Spain.

Despite the ostentatious imperial triumphalism excessively displayed at some ninety grandiose Baroque festivals celebrated annually in seventeenth-century New Spain, the late seventeenth century was a time of general decline in Spanish imperial power, manifest in the Crown's notorious inability to protect its fleets and ports from foreign pirates and in the crushing debts that plagued state finances, as well as in indigenous rebellions both on the distant frontiers and the urban heartlands of New Spain. While elite Creole antiquarians such as Sigüenza y Góngora attempted to respond to this general sense of crisis and uncertainty by imagining a historical continuity with the times of the conquest, their histories were utterly devoid of the Christian providentialism and Renaissance neoclassical universalism of the sixteenth-century historiography of the conquest to which they were literary heirs. Instead, they imagined a Neoplatonic, Hermetic, and quasi-mystical union with indigenous pre-Columbian history, mobilizing local cults, such as that of the Virgin of Guadalupe, as ciphers for a hidden and secret past. In effect, they invented a "deep history" that linked viceregal sovereignty with Mexico's pre-Columbian rulers but that was inaccessible to contemporary peninsular Spaniards (8).

Focusing on the writings of the Spanish jurist Juan Solórzano Pereyra, chapter 1 offers a terminological and conceptual discussion that brings to bear critical perspectives on the notion of an *archive* by Jacques Derrida, Roberto González Echevarría, Antony Higgins, and Diana Taylor, as well as on the notion of the *Baroque* by Walter Benjamin, José Antonio Maravall, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and others. Chapter 2 treats Sigüenza y Góngora's promotions of the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe as a cultural icon of New Spain in his *Triunfo parthénico* (1683) — a description of a literary festival and joust celebrated at the Royal University of Mexico and collection of the winning poems that had been entered into the competition — as well as in his Gongoresque poem *Primavera Indiana* and his *Glorias de Querétaro*. Chapter 3 focuses on his *Theatro de virtudes políticas*, a literary description of a triumphal arch, the construction of which he was charged with on the occasion of the arrival of a new viceroy in 1680. In his design of the arch, Sigüenza y Góngora famously used representations not of mythological figures borrowed from classical antiquity that customarily adorned such arches (including the one designed by his friend and compatriot Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz), but rather of the eleven Mexica rulers and the war god Huitzilopochtli. More convincingly places this rhetorical ploy in the context of Renaissance Hermeticist emblem literature and the Baroque fascination with hieroglyphics, esoteric scripts, and exotic cultures, which enabled him, she argues, to divest the pre-Columbian past of any associations with demonic paganism and to put forward the remarkable

proposition that the arrival of the new viceroy represented the fulfillment of an ancient Mexican (Aztec) past. Chapters 4 and 5 present discussions of some of the darker aspects of Baroque sovereignty in the Creole archive, including the emergence of a racialized discourse. Sigüenza y Góngora's account of the riot of 1692 in Mexico City, the *Alboroto y motín*, and his proto-novelesque narrative of piracy, *Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez*, were engaged, More argues, in a "fight over the occupation of urban space that pitted an elite identified by its Spanish descent against an alliance of the city's casta [or mixed-race] and indigenous subjects" (163), as well as against external foes such as the English.

Each of the five chapters offers excellent analyses of Sigüenza y Góngora's writings that are meticulously contextualized in recent historical scholarship and archival sources, as well as impressive in literary acumen and theoretical erudition. As a whole, the book amounts to the most comprehensive and significant treatment of the writings of Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora since the early works of Irving Leonard, and stands as a major statement in the recent critical debate about the nature of the Spanish-American Baroque.

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