

paramount to the life of a religious institution, and the death and burial of a saintly nun whose physical sufferings had been public knowledge could easily give rise to a cult to her memory within, and without, the convent walls, leading to determined efforts on the part of church men to promote her cause for beatification.

But if the wreckage wrought upon the physical body could thus bring a soul into a state of grace, the body, with its inherent sexuality, could be a formidable hurdle on her path. The vows of enclosure and chastity were of paramount importance to the preservation of religious life, and they were constantly challenged by the traditions that characterised the interactions of convents with the outside world. The frequent visits of men to the convent grilles to engage in so-called *devociones*, or conversations with nuns, as well as the almost daily contact between nuns and their male confessors, could easily spiral out of control, and in some cases – as Lavrin shows through a reading of inquisitorial documents – result in cases of actual seduction.

The great variety of topics introduced in this book is impressive: Lavrin leaves no stone unturned to give the reader a full-bodied impression of the form, colour and fabric of female religious life in colonial Mexico, as seen by those on the inside as well as lay spectators. Based on what must have been an exhaustive process of archival work, as well as a thorough reading of secondary sources, this is a grand synthesis of the state of a field which the author opened only four decades ago. And yet it is groundbreaking in the attention given to the nuances and details of personal lives within the convent, and to the challenges facing a woman undertaking to live a spiritual life within a community very much connected to the material world. Lavrin's concern is not to demonstrate that nuns wielded influence in the world – she takes that as a given, and instead brings us into their lives. One leaves this book with a sense of having spent fruitful time within convent walls observing phenomena otherwise as impenetrable as they are fascinating.

Independent scholar, Cambridge

ELLEN GUNNARSDOTTIR

J. Lat. Amer. Stud. 42 (2010). doi:10.1017/S0022216X10000519

Yanna Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-Between: Native Intermediaries, Indian Identity, and Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca* (Durham NC and London: Duke University Press, 2008), pp. xxi + 290, £48.00, £12.99 pb.

In 1700, colonial authorities in the Sierra Alta, Oaxaca, faced a revolt that quickly spread across Indian communities. The origins of the uprising lay in the arrest of several Indian leaders following the killing of two indigenous church officers who had alerted authorities to the existence of a local network of native priests and followers intent on keeping alive old religious practices. As recent studies by scholars such as David Tavares have shown, the event laid bare the fragile foundations of Spanish control in the area as well as the existence of a deep fracture in the native elite over the limits of cultural and political accommodation. Although only one chapter of *The Art of Being In-Between* deals with the Cajonos rebellion, the episode looms large in the author's account of the changing political landscape in which native intermediaries from a Mexican peripheral region operated until the end of the eighteenth century.

Raising questions about autonomy, cooperation and resistance, native intermediaries have enjoyed a special place in the popular, literary and historiographic imagination and have often become, as in the Mexican case, ciphers of things to

come or ambiguous allegories. The host of intermediaries who populate *The Art of Being In-Between* lack that larger-than-life dimension associated with their most famous counterparts of earlier colonial times; they comprise *caciques*, legal representatives of Indian *pueblos*, *cabildo* members, Church officers, and even a community whose original members moved into the area to keep a watchful eye over its inhabitants on behalf of the Spaniards.

The book opens in 1660 to follow the fortunes and misfortunes of two seasoned ladino *caciques* who, representing a coalition of *pueblos*, launched a lawsuit to defend local political autonomy from the encroachment of Spanish authorities. Bilingual, politically savvy and thoroughly familiar with Spanish mores and legal system, these *caciques* found ways to pursue their own economic interests by becoming the visible face of indigenous grievances. In choosing to do so, they exposed themselves to the scrutiny of authorities always ready to blame *ladinos* for social unrest and the contingency of local political alliances. The two ended up facing charges of idolatry and sedition.

The Cajonos rebellion brought to light the risks faced by those individuals who, due to a perpetual shortage of ecclesiastical ministers, had established themselves as de facto religious authorities in their communities. However, the *fiscales de iglesia* who chose to denounce the ongoing practices of native religion and paid dearly for their actions, soon fade into the background as Yannakakis turns her attention to the phases of the uprising and its aftermath. A similar shift becomes apparent throughout the study, the focus of which progressively moves away from individuals to the world of regional politics, where indigenous communities vied for economic power and influence. This change of perspective may point to the limitations of the author's original approach, since it is in the detailed reconstruction of communal conflicts that she succeeds in shedding light on the interplay of culture, religion and politics in a region that would come under tighter ecclesiastical and royal control after the Cajonos episode. Such interplay is expertly teased out from records that document the efforts by the community of Yae to secede from its *cabecera* in 1695 and the legal challenges mounted by competing *pueblos* opposed to such a move.

Throughout the book, the phrase 'cultural broker' often stands for native intermediary, but it is a term wide enough to accommodate an expansive variety of actors. Labels may not always carry too much weight, and under certain conditions one historian's cultural broker may very well pass for another's local politician. The author's fondness for the term is of a piece with her unchecked tendency to translate conflicts and actions quickly into high-stakes drama in which legal representatives 'perform' and face 'rhetorical tasks', and in which violence often turns 'symbolic'. It seems that by force of repetition we have come to accept that cultural history – or at least some current versions of it – cannot do without such theatrical trappings, which obscure the difference between everyday and exceptional actions and events. The consequences of such an approach become apparent in the treatment of the native intermediaries at the centre of the study: on the one hand the author's exhaustive reconstruction of their milieu points to the existence of a well-established political and legal culture in Indian communities, yet at the same time they are also viewed somewhat as risk takers, a dimension seldom examined; the same applies to the analysis of the arguments brought forth in the courts.

The Art of Being In-Between is an ambitious book torn between satisfying the demands of a certain cultural history and capturing the interplay of personal, communal and royal interests that made up local politics, two domains that do not

quite merge. It is also a welcome contribution to the growing and exciting historical scholarship on colonial Oaxaca.

University of Connecticut

OSVALDO PARDO

J. Lat. Amer. Stud. 42 (2010). doi:10.1017/S0022216X10000520

Kelly Donahue-Wallace, *Art and Architecture of Viceregal Latin America, 1521–1821* (Albuquerque NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), pp. xxvii + 276, \$29.95, pb.

In this very useful volume in the *Diálogos* series, Kelly Donahue-Wallace examines chronologically and by medium the art and architecture of colonial Spanish America. As with many excellent textbooks, Donahue-Wallace's has its origins in her classroom teaching, surveying standard topics in secular and religious painting and in ecclesiastical and civil architecture and urban planning. A major virtue of the volume is its balancing of different regions of Spanish America, especially in its comparisons between Mexico and Peru, but also some more peripheral areas. Although she is 'comfortable describing the scope of this book as Latin America without considering every part of the Americas' (p. xvii), her exclusion of any consideration of Brazil is an unfortunate omission, particularly since historians are increasingly analysing similarities and differences between Spanish and Portuguese America.

As a main textbook for a course on Spanish American art history or as supplementary reading for colonial Spanish American history, the book's eight well-structured chapters fit a one-term course quite well. Particularly valuable are sidebars of key primary sources in readable translations by the author. There are 32 high-quality colour plates and over a hundred black and white photos. Appropriately for a textbook, footnoting in the main text is kept to a minimum, but occasionally, when the author makes sweeping statements without specific citations, the limits of the book for scholars become evident. The separate and extensive bibliography is valuable, but the index could be more ample. In general the author has an engaging prose style, only occasionally lapsing into specialised art-history terminology. A minor quibble is that the term 'New Spanish', referring to people and things of colonial Mexico, is not generally used by Mexicanist scholars.

The organisation of the volume is straightforward. Following the introduction laying out the parameters of the book, Donahue-Wallace proceeds in chap. 1 to discuss the architecture and sculpture of what she calls 'the Missions': the densely populated central areas of Mexico and Peru during the early sixteenth century. Her discussion of the similarities and differences between ecclesiastical buildings in New Spain and Peru shows that the indigenous populations played an important role in creating the new sacred buildings – this influence is clearly evident in the elaborate relief stonework decoration found in churches in colonial Mexico, where there was a pre-Hispanic tradition of decorative stonework, while Andean churches lack this feature, consistent with its absence in the pre-Hispanic era. Although chap. 2 is ostensibly on early colonial 'painting', Donahue-Wallace examines more broadly two-dimensional visual art, including murals decorating the newly built churches, indigenous codices of Mesoamerica, coats of arms of indigenous lineages, and indigenous pictorial maps in the *relaciones geográficas*. For native pictorials, the major work of James Lockhart is relevant but apparently unknown to the author. Stretching the category of painting to include 'traditional arts in the colonial