Writing the New World

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NOTES

Opening. Of Nature and Other Demons

2. Ibid., p. 119.
3. Ibid., p. 121.
4. Ibid., p. 261.
10. While significant advances have been made in the last decade to reconstruct the environmental history of preconquest Latin America—particularly under the critical themes of colonialism, capitalism, and conservation—much of the field espouses what Mark Carey has called a “pervasive declensionist narrative, which is to say, stories of imperialist extraction and environmental degradation except when conservationists could successfully prevent destruction.” Indeed, Carey goes on, the urgency of the contemporary environmental crisis is such that it seems to have become impossible to imagine other forms of human interaction with nature beyond destruction, thereby “overlooking other histories and historical processes . . . [writing] Latin Americans out of their history by putting all the power behind outside forces.” See: Mark Carey, “Latin American Environmental History: Current Trends, Interdisciplinary Insights, and Future Directions,” in *Environmental History* 14(2) (2009), p. 222.
11. As an analogue case from the other side of the world (and modernity), see Valerie


13. For instance, von Vacano sees the writings of Bartolomé de Las Casas as examples of rhetorical, not scientific, mastery. In his view, Las Casas was not an empiricist, but rather had a humanist sensibility that allowed him “to argue for a synthetic or inclusive approach to [ruling] the natives. . . . A synthesis of civilizational and moral virtues,” that would “make the empire even more glorious.” See Diego von Vacano, *The Color of Citizenship: Race, Modernity, and Latin American/Hispanic Political Thought* (2011), p. 55. Yet missing in von Vacano’s analysis—indeed, he at times claims Las Casas wrote “without empirical basis” (56)—is how naturalist wonder served as the constitutive ground for Las Casas’s rhetorical tropes. See Lewis Hanke, *Bartolomé de Las Casas: An Interpretation of His Life and Writings* (1951), pp. 61–89. Conversely, Juliet Hooker’s proposal for a historical-interpretive method based on “juxtaposition” instead of mere comparison reveals a critical dimension for political theorists to consider as they work to trace genealogies of domination: “What happens when thinkers and traditions that are viewed as disparate are staged as proximate, what insights are revealed?” See Juliet Hooker, *Theorizing Race in the Americas: Douglass, Sarmiento, Du Bois, and Vasconcelos* (2017), p. 13.


15. For similar accounts of hybrid forms of domination in the study of legal pluralism and colonial art history, see Bianca Premo, *The Enlightenment on Trial: Ordinary Litigants and Colonialism in the Spanish Empire* (2017); see also Ananda Cohen Suarez, *Heaven, Hell, and Everything in Between: Murals of the Colonial Andes* (2016); and Susan Verdi Webster, *Lettered Artists and the Languages of Empire Painters and the Profession in Early Colonial Quito* (2017).


18. While there is much to debate concerning the great diversity of views on climate change and the interdependence of nature and humanity available to the broader public, there is also much to lament regarding the inability of scientific discourses to dislodge the political gridlock that characterizes the climate wars. Thus a burgeoning scholarly literature on the coming ends of the world—rhetorical and otherwise—is gaining a foothold, including: Andreas Malm, *The Progress of This Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World* (2017);

20. Ibid., p. 211.
27. For classical and late modern examples, see Trevor Murphy, Pliny the Elder’s Natural History: The Empire in the Encyclopedia (2004); and Vanessa Lemm, Nietzsche’s Animal Philosophy: Culture, Politics, and the Animality of the Human Being (2009).
29. Surekha Davies, for example, presents highly compelling evidence for the way cartographic practices were shaped by the demands of allegedly incommensurable landscapes. See: Surekha Davies, Renaissance Ethnography and the Invention of the Human: New Worlds, Maps and Monsters (2016).


38. Scholars situated in the study of legal pluralism, for instance, have made significant inroads in unpacking the ways indigenous peoples in Colonial Spanish America contributed to their own domination. See: Brian P. Owensby, *Empire of Law and Indian Justice in Colonial Mexico* (2011); see also Premo, *The Enlightenment on Trial*. In political theory, scholars at the intersection of settler colonial studies and the history of political thought have increasingly taken on foundational concepts—such as democracy, inclusivity, and abolitionism—to offer alternative political narratives about black and indigenous subalterns, as well as a broader intellectual canon. See: Adam Dahl, *Empire of the People: Settler Colonialism and the Foundations of Modern Democratic Thought* (2018); David Myer Temin, “Custer’s Sins: Vine Deloria Jr. and the Settler-Colonial Politics of Civic Inclusion,” in *Political Theory* 46(3) (2018), pp. 357–379; and Tacuma Peters, “The Anti-Imperialism of Ottobah Cugoano: Slavery, Abolition, and Colonialism in Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery,” in *CLR James Journal* 23(1/2) (2017), pp. 61–82.


Chapter 1. Narratives of Conquest and the Conquest of Narrative


2. The most famous scholarly account of this history is Antonello Gerbi’s *The Dispute of the New World: The History of a Polemic, 1750–1900* (1973). However, as the subject of many polemics over the decades, analysis of the representations of the Americas have been taken across multiple scholarly fields, from Literary Theory through Ethnohistory. For foundational exemplars, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (1991); Miguel Leon-Portilla, *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico* (1992); Mark Thurner, *History’s Peru: The Poetics of Colonial and Postcolonial Historiography;*
3. As Anthony Pagden has noted, New World travelers actively sought opportunities to encounter untamed landscapes, particularly as growing numbers of eyewitness reports helped mediate the projection of cultural values and desires as signs of patriotic greatness. These early accounts forged an important link between the subjective “I” and the physical eye, articulating what he calls an epistemology of possession. Experience, particularly as a form of intellectual authority, was not meant to replace the hermeneutics of texts or events, but rather, “it alone made true prudential interpretation possible.” Indeed, the obsession with crafting one’s own story was so great, that chroniclers of all walks rushed to experience the New World so that they might understand it. What they assumed about the Americas, however, was largely derivative from Iberian experiences. Anthony Pagden, “Ius et Factum: Text and Experience in the Writings of Bartolomé de Las Casas,” in *Representations* 33 (1991), pp. 147–162.


5. Narrative is a theoretical frame that overlaps with several disciplinary fields, albeit not altogether self-consciously within different paradigms. For my purposes, I have relied on the following exemplary texts—in political theory, see Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, pp. 10–14, where narration of the European encounter with the New World is framed as a “problem of recognition” between the fantastic and the familiar; in the history of science, see Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World*, pp. 11–21, where narration of the New World’s past is transformed by the rise of the “philosophical travelers” and their concern with adjudicating between historical accounts based on unreliable lived-experiences versus a new “art of reading” privileging the internal consistency of evidentiary sources; and lastly, in environmental history, see William Cronon, “A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative,” in *Journal of American History* 78(4) (1992), pp. 1347–1376. As I discuss below, Cronon’s reflections of the role of narrative form in historical inquiry brought together distinct views from the traditional social sciences and what then was called “postmodernist critical theory,” a less-than-satisfying amalgamation today. Nevertheless, Cronon’s judgment here is provocative: “Because narrative is the chief literary form that tries to find meaning in an overwhelmingly crowded and disordered chronological reality,” he writes, “[when] we choose a plot to order our environmental histories, we give them a unity that neither nature nor the past possesses so clearly. In so doing, we move well beyond nature into the intensely human realm of value. There, we cannot avoid encountering the postmodernist assault on narrative, which calls into question not just the stories we tell but the deeper purpose that motivated us in the first place: trying to make sense of nature’s place in the human past.” Ibid., p. 1349.

6. In addition to the History of Science, other fields associated with the “spatial” turn
(e.g., Geography, Art History, Cultural Studies) have seen a growing interest in Spanish and
American Empire and the Early Scientific Revolution* (2006); Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *Nature,
Empire, and Nation: Explorations of the History of Science in the Iberian World* (2006); Barbara
Geográficas* (2000); Daniela Bleichmar, Paula de Vos, Kristin Huffine, and Kevin Sheehan
(eds.), *Science in the Spanish and Portuguese Empires, 1500–1800* (2009); Ananda Cohen Su-
arez, *Heaven, Hell, and Everything in Between: Murals of the Colonial Andes* (2016); and Jaime
Marroquín Arredondo and Ralph Bauer (eds.), *Translating Nature: Cross-Cultural Histories
of Early Modern Science* (2019). In political theory, much of the work on the Spanish Empire
remains under the purview of Anthony Pagden, who already, in his *The Fall of Natural Man*,
highlighted the centrality of the sixteenth-century encounter and classification of nature in
the development of early modern thought.


8. Political theorists have looked at this particular question through the intellectual develop-
ment of international law and related justifications of Spanish imperial governance over its
colonial territories. At stake in their readings is how indigenous peoples were dispossessed of
any sovereign claim to the New World’s natural environments by virtue of the proto-Lockean
notion of mixing one’s labor with the land. Although many thinkers before Locke—including
prominent figures from the School of Salamanca like Francisco de Vitoria—saw agriculture
as the defining feature of a civilized polity, the concept is articulated most famously in: John
Fall of Natural Man*, pp. 57–108; and Beate Jahn, *The Cultural Construction of International

9. For a broad survey of the ways nature is discussed by canonical political theorists, see
the essays in: Cannavò and Lane, Jr., *Engaging Nature*. See also Barbara A. Hanawalt and
Lisa J. Kiser (eds.), *Engaging with Nature: Essays on the Natural World in Medieval and Early


11. Hayden White, “The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory,” in *The

(1962); see also David Carr, “Narrative and the Real World: An Argument for Continuity,” in


Spain* (2002); see also María M. Portuondo, *Secret Science: Spanish Cosmography and the New


18. John L. Phelan, “Authority and Flexibility in the Spanish Imperial Bureaucracy,” in

19. Broadly encompassed under the umbrella of the so-called School of Salamanca, or Sec-
ond Scholastic, Jesuit priests such as Molina and Miranda were not just theologians. Deeply invested in the practical implications of a changing Spanish landscape, they were also responsible for translating the metaphysical and normative ideals of Francisco de Vitoria into political matters concerning economics and the rule of law. See: Bernice Hamilton, *Political Thought in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (1963); see also Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, p. 60–61; and Braun, *Juan de Mariana and Early Modern Spanish Political Thought*, pp. 21–25.

20. Recent work in Imperial Studies has taken on these very themes, establishing different analytic positions concerning the empire’s political flexibility. On the metropolis side, Orlando Bentancor’s *The Matter of Empire: Metaphysics and Mining in Colonial Peru* (2017) considers the epistemological assumptions of Scholastic political thought as an ideology of material domination, particularly as it shaped attitudes about silver extraction in Colonial Peru and arguably today. According to Bentancor, “[examining] the interactions between early political writings and writings on mining will show that the particular confluence of Iberian imperial practices and philosophical ideas in the Americas frames technological and capitalist modernity as both an imperial and metaphysical project. . . . A systematic examination of metaphysical language employed in distinct disciplines allows us to narrate how the view of both nature and humans as malleable material is the result of the instrumentalist propositions inherent in imperial ideology.” See: pp. 1–2. Similarly, yet from the perspective of indigenous political thought and the writing of history, James W. Fuerst’s *New World Postcolonial: The Political Thought of Inca Garcilaso de la Vega* (2018) recovers the work of El Inca Garcilaso as a political theorist examining the cyclical decline and regeneration of postconquest Peru. For Fuerst, the “imperial turn” heralded by Pitts “may finally be creating space for new critical perspectives on the history of political thought as well as the inclusion of traditionally excluded or marginalized figures in a field that has predominantly focused on European writers and thinkers. As advances in colonial and postcolonial studies have shown us, however, the various forms of European imperialism and colonialism were not simply about what Europeans thought, wrote, or did; they were also, and continue to be, about the complex, constrained, and creative ways those whom Europeans sought to dominate or even vanquish struggled to survive, adapt, resist, and respond” (see p. 2). Both texts diligently translate the peculiarities of Spanish Empire in order to build new directions in contemporary political theory; in that spirit, I see my own argument in dialogue with theirs.


32. While growing in numbers, for a classic statement on the shifting attitudes within scientific inquiry in the early modern era, see William Eamon, Science and the Secrets of Nature: Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Culture (1994). See also María Portuondo, “Constructing a Narrative: The History of Science and Technology in Latin America,” in History Compass 7(2) (2009), pp. 500–522. The literature on how these changes affected colonial practices in the New World is equally vast, ranging from Todorov’s description of the encounter as a meeting of two cultures with different systems of epistemic and cultural authority (i.e., written versus oral traditions), to contemporary anthropological accounts, such as Charles Mann’s 1491, which account for greater levels of diversity (and transformation of the environment) among indigenous populations than had been previously attributed by contemporary scholarship. See: Tzvetan Todorov, The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other (1999), pp. 175–182; Mann, 1491, pp. 12–15. See also Greenblatt, Marvelous Possessions, pp. 14–16; and Anthony Pagden, European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism (1993), pp. 51–86.
33. Pagden, The Fall of Natural Man, p. 6.
35. Debates over the origins and historical age of the Americas have taken place over centuries. For extensive documentation of their origins, contexts, and protagonists, see Gerbi, Nature in the New World, pp. 3–11; Gerbi, The Dispute of the New World, pp. 3–34; and Cañizares-Esguerra, How to Write the History of the New World, pp. 49–59.
38. Carvajal, pp. 15–38.
42. Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, *Sumario de la natural historia de las Indias*, ibid., p. 150.
49. In studying the trans-Atlantic character of the chivalric genre, Cañizares-Esguerra describes the transformation of the chivalric epic into a satanic epic as a common heritage of both Spanish and English Creoles in the Americas. See: Cañizares-Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistadors*, pp. 83–119.
59. For a broad range of accounts documenting the indispensable role of indigenous intellectuals, see Gabriela Ramos and Yanna Yannakakis (eds.), *Indigenous Intellectuals: Knowledge, Power, and Colonial Culture in Mexico and the Andes* (2014).
Chapter 2. Oviedo, Las Casas, and the Difference That Made Nature


4. Ibid., p. 243.


6. Jennifer Pitts, “Political Theory of Empire and Imperialism,” p. 211


8. Especially important to point out here are Special Issues in the journal *History and Theory*—one by Brian Fay et al. concerning “Environment and History” (42: 4) (Dec. 2003) and another by Philip Pomper et al., “Theorizing Empire” (44: 4) (Dec. 2005). Both of these collections refer to the questions I raise in isolation of each other. Interestingly, it is Pagden’s essay within the second issue that addresses some of the paradoxes at stake in the question of empire and the natural environment. “Because of the European belief in the interdependence of tribe and place,” he points out, “which is also taken to imply that each people has an inalienable right, grounded in nature rather than in the political or civil order, to be ruled only by a member of their own tribe or clan, ‘empire,’ understood as rulership over others, has always presented particular theoretical difficulties for Europeans, which most other imperial peoples have not had to face.” The experiences I will document below are illustrative of these difficulties. See Anthony Pagden, “Fellow Citizens and Imperial Subjects: Conquest and Sovereignty in Europe’s Overseas Empire,” in *Theory and History* 44(4) (2005), p. 29. See also Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World*, pp. 204–265.


16. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri frame that global order as part and parcel of an encroaching neoliberal model of governance, a “logic of rule” with a global scope. See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (2000). Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey, however, are less sanguine about such a uniform definition, as they recognize the Eurocentric character of imperial histories. In their words, “lack of attention to the practical political, economic and military business of imperial governance, historical or contemporary,” makes any generalized analysis of empire “ultimately crippling” to the objectives of international history. See Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey, “Retrieving the Imperial: Empire and International Relations,” in *Millennium* 31(1) (2002), p. 111. See also Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Political Thought* (1999); Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (2005); and more recently, Onur Ulas Ince, *Colonial Capitalism and the Dilemmas of Liberalism* (2018).

17. Pitts, “Political Theory of Empire and Imperialism,” p. 215.

18. Ibid.

19. Pitts spends a great deal of her review essay cataloging these efforts far more efficiently than I can here. Salient among these endeavors, however, is the increasing attention exhibited by theorists to the “internal tensions” within liberalism and the broader “family resemblances” between projects of cultural, i.e., colonial, transformation, and political exclusion. See Pitts, “Political Theory of Empire and Imperialism,” pp. 216–218. See also Jeanne Morefield, *Covenants without Swords: Idealist Liberalism and the Spirit of Empire* (2005). More recently, see Jeanne Morefield, *Empires without Imperialism: Anglo-American Decline and the Politics of Deflection* (2014); and Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (2019).

20. Much of contemporary political theory today can be characterized as an unstable overlapping consensus, as theorists have arguably embraced the language of rights and justice as the dominant discourses of any possible international legal framework, while simultaneously failing to see liberalism’s paradoxes as sources of contradiction. See the essays by Jack Donnelly, “Human Rights,” pp. 601–620, and Chris Brown, “From International to Global Justice?,” pp. 621–635, in John Dryzek, Bonnie Honig, and Anne Phillips (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Political Theory*.


25. For example, in a recent edited volume on empire and modern political thought, two contributors engage with Spain’s place in the modern history of empire. On the one hand, Anthony Pagden’s essay elaborates on the ideological difficulties Imperial Spain encountered while incorporating New World territories into its legal codes. Michael Mosher, on the other hand, reads Montesquieu’s anticolonial reading of empire to reproduce the kind of logic that portrays Dutch and English colonialisms as economically progressive, while Spain and Portugal are seen as aggressively decadent. The conflicting conclusions are by no means discussed as an asset or limitation of the field. That there are dissenting opinions seems to be regarded as par for the course, rather than central to the historiography. See Anthony Pagden, “Conquest


30. As David Armitage has noted, the long-awaited return of history into the study of International Relations highlights “the maturity of the history of international thought as a subfield of intellectual history,” and in the process has opened “new conversations between historians, political theorists, International Relations scholars and international lawyers which would be continuous with those before the modern contest of the faculties drove them so forcefully, though not irreversibly, apart.” See David Armitage, “The Fifty Years’ Rift: Intellectual History and International Relations,” in Modern Intellectual History 1(1) (2004), p. 109.

31. According to Pagden, the Amerindian “savage,” “was believed to live in a world of his own making, a world of extremes, of inexplicable and frequently repellent ritual behaviour, a world controlled by passion rather than reason.” The idea of the “savage critic” came to replace “natural man” as an inversion of previously held stereotypes about Amerindians. Through fictional accounts of natives’ encounters with the European world—most notably Denis Diderot’s Tahitian sage Orou, seen in his Supplement au voyage de Bougainville—the “savage critic” attacks “civil man” as the one “who [has] failed to see what is written in the book of nature: that in the end it is we who have failed to grasp what it means to be human.” See Anthony Pagden, “The Savage Critic: Some European Images of the Primitive,” in The Yearbook of English Studies 13: Colonial and Imperial Themes Special Issue (1983), p. 33.

32. Somewhat beyond the scope of this project, Pagden focuses on changing notions of the “barbarian” as a figure who is distinguishable as an individual and not merely a philosophical category. According to Las Casas, so-called barbarians—who were able to use language, practice civil friendship and community, and possess the capacity for creating “active happiness” as the source of spiritual purposes—had an intrinsic value to their existence, particularly in light of their ability to embrace Christianity. See Pagden, The Fall of Natural Man, pp. 119–145. Pagden contrasts Las Casas’s program, however, with the historical work of José de Acosta, who argued that it was necessary to take the world of the Amerindians as a factual historical subject, where “the history of the ‘real’ but remote Indian world could illuminate the historical process itself and that by studying such a seemingly alien society [Acosta’s] European readers might come to understand something about the natural behavior of all human communities including their own.” Ibid., p. 150. In the end, Pagden sees both men as part of a complementary framework for a larger historiographical project, a view underlying the present work.

Both Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Antonio Barrera-Osorio, e.g., have lamented the lack of attention on the part of historians (much like Pagden has done for political theorists) on the crucial role that Iberian travelers, cosmographers, clergy, and members of the colonial bureaucracy played in the instituting of empire and the early modern scientific revolution in European thought. According to one recent dissertation on the subject, “The inability of established systems of knowledge and classification to account for the new reality called into question the foundations upon which those systems were built, threatening to undermine their legitimacy and ultimately opening the way for epistemological changes which would enable the flowering of natural history as a discipline and later serve as a cornerstone for the Scientific Revolution.” There is thus a great paradox in Enlightenment historiography, a larger anti-Iberian bias that colors the history of science and empire as strictly Protestant possesssions, despite their Catholic origins. See Katherine Anne Thompson, “Monsters in Paradise: The Representation of the Natural World in the Historias of Bartolomé de Las Casas and Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo,” unpublished doctoral dissertation, 2010, University of Maryland, pp. 3–6; see also Barrera-Osorio, Experiencing Nature; and Cañizares-Esguerra, Nature, Empire, and Nation.


Pagden, The Fall of Natural Man, p. 6.

In Las Casas’s case, especially, the Brevisima relación (Abbreviated Account) is a condensed version of the many volumes of ethnographic observation—both personal and anecdotal—that informed his impassioned “defense” of the Indians delivered at the Debate at Valladolid. More specifically, it was Las Casas’s Apologética Historia Sumaria de las Gentes destas Indias (Apologetic History of the Indies, completed around 1560, but never published) that served as the empirical basis of the more well-known Apología (translated as In Defense of the Indians) first published in 1550. The Abbreviated Account intervened in the larger debate as a utopian narrative that portrayed the New World environment as the antithesis to so-called European modernity. See Adorno, The Polemics of Possession in Spanish American Narrative, pp. 61–98.


For Todorov, writing is what ultimately marks the “triumph” of Europeans over the Amerindians. The symbolism of the written word, while favoring “improvisation over ritual,” divorces human contact and communication from the world, generating the self-doubt that is essential to the imposition of hierarchy over relativity. See Todorov, The Conquest of America, pp. 251–252. Walter Mignolo singles out this attitude as part of the “remarkable tendency [in the West] to link history with rhetoric instead of philosophy,” interpreting the absence of a literary language as a sign of a people’s barbarism. See Mignolo, The Darker Side of the Renaissance, p. 136. According to this perspective, it was from a particular standpoint on the writing of history that “Spanish men of letters appointed themselves to write the history that Amerindians could not properly write because of their lack of letters.” Ibid., p. 129.

Barrera-Osorio, for instance, discusses at length how “rules and practices for the collection, organization, and dissemination of information regarding the natural world of the Indies” emerged from complex imperial networks and institutions. Moreover, Spain’s Atlantic experience had an important effect on “the ways in which empirical information was used for the production of new knowledge,” in particular “the institutionalization of empirical practices at the House of Trade and Council of Indies, together with the books that were then written about these practices.” See Barrera-Osorio, Experiencing Nature, pp. 1–2.

Originally published in 1519, the Libro del muy esforzado e invencible caballero de la For-
tuna propiamente llamado Don Claribalte was written while Oviedo acted as a mine overseer in Hispaniola and Panama in the years between 1519 and 1523. For more on Don Claribalte’s place in Oviedo’s style, see Stephanie Merrim, “The Castle of Discourse: Fernández de Oviedo’s Don Claribalte (1519) or ‘Los correos andan más que los caballeros,’” in Modern Language Notes 97(2) (1982), pp. 329–346.

42. Ibid., pp. 330–331.

43. As Antonello Gerbi tells it, “There were deeper reasons for the quarrel” between Oviedo and Las Casas. Beyond contrasting perceptions of the New World’s inherent value, many of these differences rested on the normative assumptions of what the New World’s history was for. See Gerbi, Nature in the New World, pp. 353–360.

44. Myers, Fernández de Oviedo’s Chronicle of America, p. 1.

45. The phrase is attributed to the historian Pascual de Gayangos, “Discurso preliminar y Catálogo razonado de los libros de caballerías que hay en lengua castellana o portuguesa, hasta el año de 1800,” in Libros de Caballerías (1857), p. xlvii.


47. Consider Barbara Fuchs’s claim that, “when researchers in our own time uncritically rehearse the supposed repetition of the Reconquista in the Conquista, and celebrate the ‘authentic’ Spanishness of both, they participate in a construction of Spain as single-mindedly Christian, free of the Semitic ‘taint.’ This negates not only the rich multicultural experience of the medieval al-Andalus . . . but also the deliberate, calculated mimetization of one conquest into the other as a sixteenth-century strategy to encourage Spanish efforts at expansion and cultural homogenization on both the American and the Mediterranean fronts.” See Barbara Fuchs, Mimesis and Empire: The New World, Islam, and European Identities (2001), p. 8. See also Patricia Seed, Ceremonies of Possession in Europe’s Conquest of the New World, 1492–1640 (1995).


49. Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, Sumario de la natural historia de las Indias, ed. Manuel Ballesteros Gaibrois (2002), p. 73. My translation of the following original text: “[N]o está averiguado si son animal o pescado, porque ellas andan en el agua y en los árboles y por tierra, y tienen cuatro pies, y son mayores que conejos, y tienen cola de lagarto, y la piel toda pintada, y de aquella manera de pellejo, aunque diverso y apartado en la pintura, y por el cerro o espínazo unas espinas levantadas y agudos dientes y colmillos.”


51. Myers, Fernández de Oviedo’s Chronicle of America, p. 77.


53. Fernández de Oviedo, Sumario de la natural historia de las Indias, p. 55. My translation of the following original text: “[L]a cosa que más conserva y sostiene las obras de natura en la memoria de los mortales, son las historias y los libros en que se hallan escritas.”


56. Little has been written about Las Casas’s role in the utopian literary tradition of the early Renaissance. In his lifetime, Las Casas attempted to enact a utopian community on the margins of Spanish rule (on the coast of Venezuela), blurring the lines of so-called civilization and barbarism by putting Indians to work side-by-side with Spaniards. Though the project known as La Vera Paz (1520–1521) failed, Las Casas’s efforts were captured in his book Memorial of Remedies for the Indies (1990). The text was published in Holland months before the publication of Thomas More’s Utopia, though how strong the links were between the two men and other utopian texts has not been a subject of much scholarly inquiry. For an exception, see Victor N. Baptiste, Bartolomé de Las Casas and Thomas More’s “Utopia”: Connections and Similarities. A Translation and Study (1990).

57. Much of the attention surrounding the Brevisima relación and its depiction of Spanish violence overshadows Las Casas’s own commitments to a Spanish imperial project, albeit under less noxious parameters. More specifically, Las Casas has been singled out in contemporary scholarship as representing “another face of empire” in two ways: first, through his advocacy for importing Africans to replace Indians as slaves; second was his calling for a kind of “ecclesiastical imperialism” under Spanish rule, where the monarchy was encouraged to take up their role as sovereigns of the Christian world in protecting and converting Amerindians. For more on these two legacies, see Daniel Castro, Another Face of Empire: Bartolomé de Las Casas, Indigenous Rights, and Ecclesiastical Imperialism (2007), pp. 1–16; 63–104.

58. Las Casas, An Account, Much Abbreviated, of the Destruction of the Indies, p. 5


61. Discussions of monsters, demons, and other creatures that inhabited the early universe of the Americas takes one back to the experience of wonder that was so characteristic of New World encounters. According to an alternative reading, for Las Casas it is the sacred and demonic, not the culturally different, that pervades the unknown causes of monstrosities and strangeness in the New World. See Cañizares-Esguerra, Puritan Conquistadors, pp. 120–177.


63. Ibid., p. 151.

64. The verses read as follows: “[21] The bread of the needy is their life: he that defraudeth him thereof is a man of blood. [22] He that taketh away his neighbour’s living slayeth him; and he that defraudeth the labourer of his hire is a bloodshedder.” Old Testament, King James Version.


67. Despite being a philosophical, juridical, and arguably scientific leader in the 100 years after the encounter, the Spanish Crown was no friend to the principles, figures, and arguments that shaped the scientific revolution taking place in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The “new philosophies,” as Pagden points out, were considered heretical as a result of their close affinities with Cartesian thought, and particularly their rejection of transubstantiation and association with heretical sects. The focus of the accusations, however, would eventually be deviated by “[shifting] attention from the substance of the arguments to the status of the person holding them.” The figure of Descartes was in effect secularized; his writings were thought to “be orthodox since the man who created them had himself led such an exemplary

68. As Federico Carvajal points out, “Far from being a generalized colonial condition,” visions of gender, masculinity, deviance, and cultural competition born out of the period of the Reconquista, “emerged as a specific practice of Spanish imperial rule in its attempt to textualize ‘just causes’ of cultural domination.” See Carvajal, Butterflies Will Burn, p. 6.


70. According to von Vacano, at stake in Las Casas’s juxtaposition of the Amerindians’ beauty (“handsome and easy on the eye”) with the Spaniard’s animal-like behavior (as “inhuman and unjust barbarians”) is “not the idea of how different cultures can be seen as similar in some way; rather, it is about the categorical definitions about what counts as human,” at some level a naturalist claim. Ibid., p. 37.


73. Ibid., p. 16.

74. At one point in his defense of the natural slavery thesis, Sepúlveda frames the relation between Europeans and Indians in absolute terms: “Compare the gifts of magnanimity, temperance, humanity and religion of these men [the Spaniards] . . . with those homunculi [i.e., the Indians] in whom hardly a vestige of humanity remains.” See Pagden, The Fall of Natural Man, p. 117. See also Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, “A Treatise on the Just Causes for War Against the Indians,” in Las Casas, An Account, Much Abbreviated, of the Destruction of the Indies, pp. 103–105.

75. For comparative analysis of the debate, see Lewis Hanke, All Mankind Is One: A Study of the Disputation between Bartolomé De Las Casas and Juan Ginés De Sepúlveda in 1550 on the Intellectual and Religious Capacity of the American Indians (1994).

76. Pitts, “Political Theory of Empire and Imperialism,” p. 213.

Chapter 3. The Anthropolitics of Bernardino de Sahagún

1. Bernardino de Sahagún, “The Ahuizotl,” in Florentine Codex, trans. Charles E. Dibble and Arthur J. O. Anderson (1963), Book XI, p. 55. Courtesy of the University of Utah Press. Translation of the following original text: “Es tamaño como un perrillo, tiene el pelo muy lezne y pequeño, tiene las orejitas pequeñas y puntiagudas, tiene en cuerpo negro y muy liso, tiene la cola larga y en el cabo de la cola una como mano de persona; tiene pies y manos, y las manos y pies como de mona; habita este animal en los profundos manantiales de las aguas; y si alguna persona llega a la orilla del agua donde él habita, luego le arrebata con la mano de la cola, y le mete debajo del agua, y lleva al profundo, y luego turba el agua y le hace vertir y levantar olas.” See Bernardino de Sahagún, Historia General de las Cosas de la Nueva España (1985), Volume 2, p. 648.


6. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, How to Write the History of the New World, pp. 60–129; James


9. As Anthony Pagden has noted, many of these early accounts forged an epistemology of possession. Experience, as a form of intellectual authority, was not meant to replace the hermeneutics of texts or events, but rather, “it alone made true prudential interpretation possible.” See Anthony Pagden, “Ius et Factum: Text and Experience in the Writings of Bartolomé de Las Casas,” in *Representations* 33 (1991), p. 154. See also Antonello Gerbi, *Nature in the New World*; and Cañizares-Esguerra, *How To Write the History of the New World.*


17. Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico*, p. 34.

18. Ibid.

19. The controversial question of how Sahagún conquered his own interpreters to write a kind of history that stripped them of their place as victims has generated new interest by ethnohistorians. The issue is particularly salient for this project as one of the questions I explore is the extent to which Sahagún’s silence on certain concepts discussed in Book XI can be interpreted as instances of sympathy, or censure. See Rabasa, *Tell Me The Story of How I Conquered You*, pp. 106–129.

20. As Todorov has pointed out, in writing a history of conquest by and for indigenous peoples, Sahagún was “putting his own knowledge in the service of the preservation of the native culture,” acknowledging a greater potential for intercultural dialogue than others. See Todorov, *The Conquest of America*, p. 237.


27. Ibid., p. 20.

28. While one of Imperial Spain’s most long-standing contributions to the canon of Western political thought is the concept of a state of nature, contemporary accounts of its origins largely circumvent the scientific, anthropological, and naturalist work of Spanish missionaries that inform it. A broader understanding of that empirical foundation would contribute greatly to clarifying the concept’s political implications and its divergent trajectories within early modern thought. Beate Jahn, for example, traces the concept of the state of nature—and particularly its centrality to International Relations (IR) theorizing—to the legal debates between Spaniards over the humanity of Amerindians. Neither Spain’s imperial objectives nor the Amerindians’ pagan practices represented enough reason to have this debate. Indeed, Jahn argues, it was the very challenge of New World environments to “the cultural meaning of the world—established through European historical experiences and interpreted through the prism of the Christian faith” that justified having the argument. Yet while Jahn’s text captures a formative moment in the break with the medieval world and the construction of a conceptual state of nature, it is perhaps also an illustrative example of the types of readings that histories of international relations must be careful to engage with and unpack. It is interesting to note, for example, that Jahn’s argument cuts itself from its historical referent at the moment where perhaps the culture-nature dynamic it deploys is at its most tense and profound: at the cusp of the Spiritual Conquest and its demand for greater ethnographic and naturalist knowledge. See Jahn, The Cultural Construction of International Relations, pp. 113–131.


32. Cañizares-Esguerra, Puritan Conquistadors, p. 31.


34. Ibid., Volume 1, p. 33.


36. Ibid., p. 177.


41. Furst, The Natural History of the Soul in Ancient Mexico, p. 31.


43. My translation of the following original text: “El segundo lugar donde había antiguamente muchos sacrificios, a los cuales venían de lejas tierras, es cabe la sierra de Tlaxcala, donde había un templo que se llamaba Toci, donde concurrían gran multitud de gente a la celebridad de esta fiesta Toci, que quiere decir ‘nuestra abuela,’ y por otro nombre se llama.
Tzapotlatenan, que quiere decir ‘la diosa de los temazcales y de las medicinas.’ Y después acá edificaron allí una iglesia de Sancta Ana, donde agora hay monesterios y religiosos de nuestro padre San Francisco, y los naturales llámanla Toci, y concurren a esta fiesta de más de cuarenta leguas gente a la fiesta de Toci. Y llaman así a Sancta Ana, tomado ocasión de los predicadores que dizen porque Sancta Ana es abuela de todos los cristianos, y así lo han llamado y llaman en el púlpito: Toci, que quiere decir ‘nuestra abuela.’ Y todas las gentes que vienen como antiguamente a la fiesta de Toci, vienen so color de Sancta Ana, pero como el vocablo es equívoco y tienen respecto a lo antiguo, más se cree que vienen por lo antiguo no por lo moderno [sic].’ See Sahagún, Book XI: Earthly Things, in Florentine Codex, pp. 1050–1051.

46. Ibid., p. 178.
48. Goodman, Power and Penury; see also Eamon, “The Difference That Made Spain, The Difference That Spain Made.”
50. The original statement is: “[If a] sentence is faithfully translated into a foreign language: [is it] two distinct statements or one?” See Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language (1972).

Chapter 4. The Imperial Renaissance of Francisco Hernández

7. As I will address further below, it has taken over 400 years for Hernández’s collected works to be published. The compilation can be attributed almost single-handedly to the noted Mexican historian Germán Somolinos d’Artois, who oversaw the project at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, between 1959 and 1984. See Francisco Hernández, *Obras Completas*, 7 Volumes, ed. Germán Somolinos d’Artois (1959–1984).


16. When asked by Queen Isabella to what use could she, already knowing Castilian, put the grammar, Nebrija’s work was defended with an exhortation to “bring under her yoke many barbarian peoples and nations with strange languages, who, having been defeated, will have to receive the laws that the victor imposes on the vanquished, and with them, our language; it is then that they will use this art to learn it.” Ibid., pp. 10–11. See also Claudio Véliz, *The New World of the Gothic Fox: Culture and Economy in English and Spanish America* (1994).


21. Hernández was suspected of at least one of these counts—possibly being born of Jewish descent—and historians speculate he may have been suspected of sympathy for Jewish orthodoxies during his time at the Monastery of Guadalupe in Southern Spain. See Benito-Vessels, “Hernández in México,” pp. 45–47; see also John E. Longhurst, “Luther in Spain: 1520–1540,” in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 103(1) (1959), pp. 66–93.


29. For analysis of the civilizational narrative within Las Casas and Sahagún, see Todorov, The Conquest of America.


31. Francisco Hernández, Quatro libros de la Naturaleza, y virtudes de las plantas y animales que están reunidos en el uso de Medicina en la Nueva España, y el Método, y corrección, y preparación, que para administrálas se requiere con lo que el Doctor Francisco Hernández escribió en lengua latina, 1615. Housed in the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University, Providence, RI.


36. Ibid., p. 48.


38. Ibid., p. 262, n. 5.


Chapter 5. José de Acosta and the Ends of Empire

1. Acosta, *Natural and Moral History of the Indies*, p. 82.
2. Ibid., pp. 88–89.
5. Surprisingly, there is an inadequate amount of secondary literature by political theorists that has attempted to trace the appropriation of Acosta’s writings by early modern thinkers. Particularly curious is the lack of comparisons between Acosta and the British philosophers that dedicated the most time to his observations—Locke and Bacon. Locke’s famous invention of the “state of nature” has been previously shown to have relied heavily on Acosta’s ethnographic observations. See William G. Batz, “The Historical Anthropology of John Locke,” in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35(4) (1974), pp. 663–670. Bacon’s reliance on Acosta, moreover, has only cursorily been studied, despite resounding parallels and stylistic similarities. See Silvia Manzo, “Utopian Science and Empire: Notes on the Iberian Background of Francis Bacon’s Project,” in *Studii de Știință și Cultură*, Anul VI, 64 (23) (2010), pp. 111–129.
6. Research in natural history was an indispensable stimulus in the development of vernacular literary cultures. Indeed, recent work in the history of the field has shown it to be a central feature of the transitions between medieval and early modern scholarship, as well as the gateway to development in the physical sciences. See Nicholas Jardine, Anne Secord, and Emma Spary (eds.), *Cultures of Natural History* (1996).
10. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, p. 301 ($49).
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., pp. 99–100.
17. Acosta, *Natural and Moral History of the Indies*, p. 98. The expression “torturing nature’s secrets out of her,” itself an extrapolation of Gottfried Leibniz’s phrase “putting nature on the rack,” is often misattributed to Francis Bacon and has been the subject of much historiographical debate. Bacon, in fact, held far more scientific affinities with the Spaniards than is often acknowledged. See Peter Pesic, “Wrestling with Proteus: Francis Bacon and the ‘Torture’ of Nature,” in *Isis* 90(1) (March 1999), pp. 81–94. See also Manzo, “Utopian Science and Empire,” pp. 114–116.
20. Ibid.
24. Translation of the following original text: “En que se tratan las cosas notable del cielo, y elementos, metales, plantas y animales de ellas [las Indias]; y los ritos, y ceremonias, leyes, y gobierno, y guerras de los Indios.” See José de Acosta, *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* (Sevilla: Juan de León, 1590). Heir to Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, Philip II was responsible for commissioning the first cartographic relaciones (surveys) of the New World, opening a space for commercial, scientific, and theological pursuits, most of which were reliant on field manuals like Acosta’s *Historia Natural*. See Mundy, *The Mapping of New Spain*, pp. 1–10. Isabel herself would go on to become sovereign of the Spanish Netherlands from 1598 to 1633, heralding a so-called Golden Age of the Spanish Netherlands until the liberation of the Low Countries in 1648. See Cordula Van Wyhe (ed.), *Isabel Clara Eugenia: Female Sovereignty in the Courts of Madrid and Brussels* (2011).
30. Ibid.
37. Ibid., pp. 436–449.
38. Ibid., p. xxii.
39. Pagden, for example, sees Acosta as an originator of the framework now commonly understood as part of the Scottish Enlightenment. See Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, pp. 198–200.
41. Ibid., pp. 20–21. The scripture Acosta refers to is Psalm 135, Verse 6, which reads: “The Lord does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths.”
42. Ibid., p. 21.
47. Silvia Manzo has made a compelling case for reading Bacon’s use of the Spanish Empire, and Acosta’s writings in particular, far more sympathetically than what Irving presents. She notes, for example, how “early modern imperial Spain seems to have been assessed by Bacon as a model of growing empire in contrast to the imperfect and timid British attempts to gain the world overseas. On his evaluation, the leading educational system and the learning of the Jesuits was one of the grounds of Spain’s greatness. To this ground, he added the economic wealth achieved thanks to the treasures obtained from the Spanish colonies. The financial, political and institutional support of the navigational expeditions was thought to be a fundamental issue in this regard. So was the administration of political power through specific commissions subordinated to a central council. Spain could be seen as a fortunate instance of the application of science to the construction and expansion of empire.” See Silvia Manzo, “Utopian Science and Empire: Notes on the Iberian Background of Francis Bacon’s Project,” in *Studii de Știință și Cultură*, Anul VI, 64 (23) (2010), p. 122.
50. According to Walter Mignolo, for example, Acosta was responsible for inaugurating a
scientific search for the mechanics of nature that would contribute to human freedom. Acosta himself may have proclaimed that “knowing the natural world was knowing and admiring its creator,” but the emerging work of Francis Bacon and other natural philosophers instead advocated a method that “[replaced] the search for causes with the search for laws.” Man’s relationship to nature was thus transformed from one of mutual elucidation to one of confrontation. See Walter D. Mignolo, “Commentary: José de Acosta’s Historia natural y moral de las Indias: Occidentalism, the Modern/Colonial World, and the Colonial Difference,” in Acosta, Natural and Moral History of the Indies, p. 475.

Epilogue. Toward a Natural History of Colonial Domination

1. José de Acosta, Natural and Moral History of the Indies, p. 22.
2. George Antony Thomas, The Politics and Poetics of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (2012), pp. 37–56; see also Stephanie Kirk, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and the Gender Politics of Knowledge in Colonial Mexico (2016).
3. Octavio Paz, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz o las trampas de la fe (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1995).
6. Alison McQueen, Political Realism in Apocalyptic Times (2017); Brian Harding, Not Even a God Can Save Us Now: Reading Machiavelli after Heidegger (2017); Adam Kotsko, Neoliberalism’s Demons: On the Political Theology of Late Capital (2018).
15. Though many of these positions have evolved over the last decades, representative examples include: Quentin Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,” in


20. Consider, for example, the critical discussion raised by Cara Daggett concerning the links between a radical politics of work in the Anthropocene and what a genealogy of energy, production, waste, and exploitation can clarify about our ability to imagine ecological alternatives to capitalist-dependent forms of labor. See Cara Daggett, *The Birth of Energy*, pp. 187–206.


22. Ibid., p. 24.


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