"good" ritual) or of dissension (a "bad" thing, ritually speaking). In a culture governed by a hermeneutical tradition derived ultimately from the relationship of the Old Testament to the New, all events, as well as all texts, were subject to interpretive consideration and judgment. Moreover, the essentially dualist understanding of the world in the Middle Ages—divided between the operations of God and the Devil—inherently contests the monistic vision of society held by functionalist anthropology.

Buc's larger point is that "there can be no anthropological readings of rituals depicted in medieval texts, but only anthropological readings of medieval textual practices" (p. 4). And those readings must be grounded in a full historiographical sensitivity to a given's author's political intentions in writing and an understanding of the way in which medieval texts were "forces in the practice of power": that is, "were instruments of power" (p. 259). One is tempted to suggest that in transferring "ritual" from the domain of social practice to that of textuality, and in seeing textuality as always already motivated by unarticulated "ideological" goals, Buc is transferring to textuality the very functionalism that he denies to practice, albeit of a somewhat different nature. But then, historians of every stripe—modern, postmodern, literary, and social—are always hard put to eschew the attempt to understand how the past and its plethora of actions and artifacts functioned.

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JORGE CAÑIZARES-ESGUERRA. *How to Write the History of the New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World*. (Cultural Sitings.) Stanford: Stanford University Press. 2001. Pp. xviii, 450. $55.00.

Seldom does a work of such obvious historiographic significance and intellectual merit so overtly result from the efforts of such an engaged cultural critic. A native of Ecuador, Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra would convince his readers that greater emphasis on the intellectual history of the Hispanic world, and specifically on its eighteenth-century scholars' debates about how correctly to source and write the history of the Americas, will ultimately neutralize a Latin American historiography that does little more than "emphasize inordinate social conflict and collective failure" (pp. 347–48). Like many an intellectual historian before him, this author insists that we should tune down the social and the collective many while vaunting the mental achievements of the few if we are to grasp the genius not just of Latin America but of the peninsular motherland as well.

This being about debates, the author organizes his book ideologically rather than diachronically. The main targets—not just of Cañizares-Esguerra but of the Hispanic intellectual elite he centers on—are the eighteenth-century northern European scholarship that denigrated Amerindian cultures and the sixteenth-century Spanish historians who had originally described the Amerindians for European audiences. Thus the first chapter of this book is on "enlightened" eighteenth-century northerners like the comte de Buffon, the abbé Raynal, and William Robertson, and the second is on sixteenth-century "humanistic" writers whom the northerners later attacked. Cañizares-Esguerra essentially skips the seventeenth century. The remaining three chapters study the patriotic Hispanic reactions against these northern put downs. Chapter three focuses on the eighteenth-century peninsular patriots who marshaled evidence that, beyond Miguel de Cervantes and Lope de Vega, their culture had not been and was not obtuse and thus their historiographic efforts in the Western Hemisphere were noble, while the last two chapters deal with those the author calls the "Creoles" but who, as he recognizes, would be better labeled "the overseas Spanish clergy." Mostly speaking from New Spain, these writers defended themselves first against the northern Europeans and latterly against the secularizing Bourbons as well.

Cañizares-Esguerra's two main theses are as follows. While all Hispanic scholars were equally patriotic, their internal exchanges regarding the writing of American history reveal "the density and originality of [their] intellectual debates" (p. 209) in comparison not only to those of the northerners—in the early seventeenth century, "Spanish scholarship . . . far surpassed anything then available in English" (p. 363)—but also to the little that North Americans like "Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and Benjamin Franklin" had done to respond to European critics of America (p. 210). To this insistence on Hispanic intellectual sophistication, the author adds the thesis that in their scholarship, the Creoles especially repeatedly anticipated our current preoccupations. For instance, their criticisms of travel literature "foreshadowed many of our contemporary postcolonial insights" (p. 206).

What were the discourses in which the Hispanics spoke not only to the future but in an equal when not superior way for the Europeans of their own time? In what follows I oppose the northerners' views and those of the Hispanics. As regards Amerindians, these writers argued that American cultures were not as great as Hernan de Cortés and the missionary chroniclers made them out to be. Or perhaps such cultures were indeed very old and thus great? How could they be great, when they could not "write," leaving only childish scrawls? Or did they indeed write, in hieroglyphics we still struggle to understand? The conquistadors were brutal, but perhaps the slaughter was not so great, if the preconquest population was actually much less than thought. Had the natives really been capable of time keeping and memory and thus historical recordings, as was claimed, for instance, on the basis of the great circular stone monuments? You will see they were, once scholars solve the meaning of these images. The indolence of today's Amerindians proves their earlier incapacity. Not so; that is due to the destruction of the earlier Indian elite, for elites always lead.

As regards the European settlers, they were dazzled by what they did (not) see. Still, their accounts remain eyewitness primary sources and must be accorded

more credit than those of the mere system builders from northern Europe. The Spanish accounts often prove incoherent and episodic when "read philosophically" and thus cannot be credited; better a "conjectural history" rooted in common sense. In fact, the at times awkward prose of, say, Toribio Motolinía proves his believability and certainly attests to his humanity. The priests who usually wrote these accounts were credulous and "superstitious." Perhaps so at times, but at least they understood the native languages and cultures by having lived with the Americans, which foreigners had not. All readers of this book will be struck, as was this reviewer, by how many of the problems that we often think of as modern were already on the table two and a half centuries ago. For this reader, at least, the greatest merit of Cañizares-Esguerra's book is to humble students by revealing the deep roots of many of the questions that we argue over so passionately today, as if we had first raised them.

In the process, Cañizares-Esguerra introduces us to debates between scores of intellectual figures that he has reconstructed mostly from unprinted sources painstakingly tracked down in the archives and libraries of three continents, a major feat of original research. Figures whom he particularly makes jump out at us are the Franciscan chronicler Juan de Torquemada (whom I for one have clearly underrated), the arrogant yet supremely challenging Cornelius de Pauw, the meteoric Italian Lorenzo Boturini, whose "lost" collection is a thread that helps hold much of this book together, the duet of José Antonio de Alzate y Ramírez and Antonio de León y Gama, the singular José Ignacio Borunda, Pedro Rodríguez Campomanes, the Catalan Jesuit refugees in Italy after the expulsions of 1767, and certainly the founder of the Archive of the Indies Juan Bautista Muñoz, even if the author, without analysis, gets patriotically carried away by having him anticipate the nineteenth-century German historiographic revolution.

In the telling of these debates, two authorial procedures become evident. First, Cañizares-Esguerra only rarely furnishes the reader with our contemporary take on a given debate question that perchance has since settled or reoriented the problem at hand. I often wished for this angle of analysis, but the author's strategy is postmodernist; indeed, he occasionally even puts the word "truth" in quotes, as if to say that truth can only be gauged within the terms of any given debate context. Second, the author systematically assumes that any given person's posture on a particular question resulted from his sociopolitical position and his relation to his opponent rather than emerging from the terms of the problem itself, a stance that occasionally has the effect of releasing the author from any responsibility for critiquing his sources. There are other cavils I might raise, the most glaring of which is that Cañizares-Esguerra's work, while defining religious values as the heart of New Spain's "patriotic epistemology" (p. 267), has nothing substantial to say about religion in that epistemology or in national life, and as little to say about his many clerical sources' religious existence. Indeed, their religious status is often mentioned only in passing. This is a work of secular inspiration through and through.

Nonetheless, by stitching and weaving these figures and their debates into an impressive tapestry of intellectual life in Spain and its colonies, Cañizares-Esguerra has left a monument of intellectual history that will ultimately be read by, and inspire, all Atlantic and Latin American historians. It is not only the range of the work that impresses but also its depth, as the author plunges in to refine previous arguments so as to respond better to his sources. Occasionally the push for attention to Latin American thought appears archaically cantankerous, as when he suggests that the clerical baroque, which often enough suggested that all the historiography on New Spain be pitched because it was wrong, be our present-day inspiration for reexamining what passes for orthodoxy in Hispanic studies. But anyone who can praise that baroque for its "aggressive modernity" (p. 343) and get away with it through serious analysis, as does this scholar, has our admiration and thanks.

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Nancy Leys Stepan. *Picturing Tropical Nature*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 2001. Pp. 283. $35.00.

Studies of the ways in which the tropics have been constructed have become a major publishing passion of late. We have had works dealing with travel accounts, art, tropical medicine, botanical transfers, and exotic gardens, as well as nineteenth-century anthropology and its related photographic and anatomical activities. The reason for all this activity is, of course, partly related to the burgeoning of postcolonial studies. The tropics were constructed by scholars, travelers, artists, doctors, and botanists from the temperate regions. They were thus the tropical "other," the environmental touchstone by which the temperate self could be defined. Tropical environments were also seen as reflecting the human temperaments of those who lived in them, embracing unbridled passions, a prolific human biodiversity, dark groves of mysterious psychological states, hidden horrors of disease that reflected frightening zoological and entomological phenomena, as well as a seemingly paradoxical lassitude, a fatalism that precluded the energetic achievements temperate peoples so readily attributed to themselves.

Of course, such a set of negative images did not arise fully formed from the earliest times when travelers, adventurers, conquerors, and scientists encountered the tropics. At first depicted as El Dorados, they were tropical Edens by the eighteenth century. It was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that the tropics supposedly shifted from glorious garden to region of gorgeous gloom. Only then did all the more