

José Cárdenas Bunsen.
La aparición de los libros plúmbeos y los modos de escribir la historia. De Pedro de Castro al Inca Garcilaso de la Vega.

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JOSÉ CÁRDENAS BUNSEN SETS OUT TO ANSWER two straightforward yet deceptively simple questions about the false parchments, relics, and lead books discovered in Granada in the racially charged context of the aftermath of the Morisco revolt of the Alpujarras: first, “¿qué impacto produjeron los descubrimientos del Sacromonte de Granada en los presupuestos de las disciplinas relacionadas con la reconstrucción del pasado a finales del siglo XVI?”; second, “¿cómo se articula la red intelectual de sus tempranos estudiosos?” (18). To answer these questions, Cárdenas Bunsen offers a set of five case studies that provide substantial insights for scholars of early modern Iberian literature, history, and material culture, chiefly those interested in the “república de las letras andaluzas” (412). The material Cárdenas Bunsen describes and analyzes will be of value to researchers interested in the history of reading and writing practices, scholarly networks, and translation practices. For graduate students and other emerging scholars, the book is an exemplary demonstration of painstaking archival research, exhaustive analysis of letters, and other manuscript communications. Indeed, the study reminds us that the advent of printing in the Iberian Peninsula by no means diminished the intensity of manuscript communications. In this sense, although the book does not engage such studies as *Comunicación, conocimiento y memoria en la España de los siglos XVI y XVII* (1999) or *Corre manuscrito: Una historia cultural del Siglo de Oro* (2001) by Fernando Bouza, it certainly deserves a place alongside them in its sustained effort to draw additional attention to the historiographic and epistemological functions of manuscript communications.

Chapter 1 (“Pedro de Castro, el arzobispo de Granada y la concepción del aparato crítico de los libros plúmbeos”) is dedicated to the determination of the Archbishop of Granada, Pedro de Castro, to ascertain the authenticity of the discoveries given that the information the lead books contained

significantly altered the religious and linguistic history of the Iberian Peninsula. This chapter reveals a lesser-known side of Iberian humanist hermeneutics by showing Castro not only as a dedicated church leader and rigorous student of the past, but also as a discerning student of Arabic. For Cárdenas Bunsen, Castro's assessment resulted from "una secuencia de operaciones conceptuales que incluyen las pericias practicadas sobre la materialidad de los objetos, las pautas de traducción palabra por palabra de los plomos, la búsqueda personal ... de una base histórica congruente con los relatos inscritos en los plomos, la documentación de los milagros y el análisis de las proposiciones de los libros refundido en notas dispersas" (107).

Chapter 2 ("El anticuario Fernández Franco y el Sacromonte: el principio de la materialidad y la instalación del lugar en la escritura histórica") offers the perspective of antiquarians by focusing on the correspondence of Juan Fernández Franco and his personal annotations to Ambrosio de Morales's *Corónica general de España*. According to Cárdenas Bunsen, in Fernández Franco's work "convergen los patrones de una carrera profesional quinientista, la circulación de las antigüedades, la restauración del pasado y la discusión de las pesquisas anticuarias de los correspondientes" (115). Chapter 3 ("El traductor Miguel de Luna y el cronista Abentarique: las sutilezas del aparato crítico, la guerra justa y la legitimidad árabe-española") retraces the role played in the polemic by Miguel de Luna, author of *Historia verdadera del rey don Rodrigo* and one of the individuals commissioned to translate the lead books and parchments from Arabic into Spanish. Chapter 4 ("Bernardo de Aldrete y los polemistas del Sacromonte: el castellano, el árabe y la constitución de una herramienta analítica gramatical") focuses on Bernardo de Aldrete, author of *Del origen y principio de la lengua castellana* and *Varias Antigüedades de España, África i otras provincias*. In this chapter Cárdenas Bunsen digs deep into the initial considerations that triggered the writing of the above mentioned books and examines Aldrete's shifting positions in relation to the grammatical plausibility of the Spanish and Arabic included in the parchments.

Chapter 5 ("El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, su circuito intelectual y la epistemología de los *Comentarios reales*") fills in crucial gaps in the famed chronicler's biography and reveals his role within the intellectual circuit formed around Bishop Pedro de Castro. Moreover, Cárdenas Bunsen's study situates itself very well within current scholarship of the experiences and ideas that shaped Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's writing, such as Felipe Ruan's "Language, Genealogy, and Archive: Fashioning the Indigenous Mother in the *Comentarios reales* and in Sixteenth-Century Mestizo Petitions" (*Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2016, pp. 35–64); and Erika Valdivieso's "The Inca Garcilaso in Dialogue with Neoplatonism" (*Bulletin of Latin American Research*, vol. 37, no. 5, 2018, pp. 74–85). Paying close attention to Inca Garcilaso's ecclesiastical role and institutional affiliations during his stay in Córdoba, Cárdenas Bunsen argues that the "currículo disciplinario de la carrera eclesiástica [grammar, music, canon law, and theology] se infiltra ... invisible pero inseparablemente, en la escritura de Garcilaso y es el fundamento sobre el que descansa la epistemología de los *Comentarios Reales*" (360). In this line of reasoning, Cárdenas Bunsen's work

also complements important scholarship on the endeavors of mestizos from Perú to secure a place within the Catholic Church and Spanish society, such as Ruan's "Andean Activism and the Reformulation of Mestizo Agency and Identity in Early Colonial Peru" (*Colonial Latin American Review*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2012, pp. 209–37).

One of the main merits of Cárdenas Bunsen's approach to the discoveries at the Sacromonte lies in his ability to reconstruct an intellectual milieu where specialized disciplines did not confine themselves to rigid boundaries. Having said that, the book falls somewhat short of what it sets out to accomplish. In particular, the book does not address sufficiently the status of falsehood within sixteenth-century Spanish historiography or the fact that the discoveries at the Sacromonte were forgeries. In this regard, it is revealing that in his introduction, the author only acknowledges in passing the fact that Miguel de Luna's *Historia verdadera* was "falsa en última instancia" (25). Similarly, in the chapter dedicated to Miguel de Luna, the author sidesteps the topic by referring pejoratively to Luna's writings as mere "superchería histórica" (219).

On the question of Luna, I am reminded of Mary M. Gaylord's article "The True History of Early Modern Writing in Spanish," in which she examines "the writing of texts advertised as true histories" and places Miguel de Luna's *Historia verdadera* and the lead books of Sacromonte within the group of "more suspect narratives that play to and on the general reader's curiosity, recounting fictional events alleged, more or less convincingly, actually to have happened" (*Modern Language Notes*, vol. 57, no. 2, 1996, pp. 213–25). More crucially, in relation to sixteenth-century Spanish historiography, Kira von Ostenfeld-Suske points out that "the creators of the [lead books] had constructed their texts with a profound understanding of what 'true' (in the Renaissance sense) really looked like; they employed recognizable principles of historical criticism such as a distinction between primary and secondary sources and a sensitivity to historical distance and anachronism. As a result of the proliferation and popularity of these forgeries, Spanish learned readers and scholars became increasingly sensitive to errors of fact, chronology and detail, historical and linguistic anachronisms, and a host of other textual problems" (*Official Historiography, Political Legitimacy, Historical Methodology, and Royal and Imperial Authority in Spain under Phillip II, 1580–99*, PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 2014, pp. 32–33). Furthermore, in their study of Jesuit Jerónimo Román de la Higuera, "also a famous literary forger," Mercedes García-Arenal and Fernando Rodríguez Mediano remind us that "Spain's proto-Enlightenment scholarship ... developed its critical tools precisely as a result of confronting these falsifications and their implications for Spanish history" ("Jerónimo Román de la Higuera and the Lead Books of Sacromonte," *The Conversos and Moriscos in Late Medieval Spain and Beyond*, edited by Kevin Ingram, Brill, 2009, pp. 243–68). As the contributions of the above cited authors suggest, there was much that writers of fiction and Spanish historians learned from the forgeries from the Sacromonte and Torre Turpiana. In the case of Cárdenas Bunsen's otherwise rigorous study, not addressing the link between forgery and historiography is a missed opportunity that weakens the overall argument and lessens his contribution.

Nonetheless, *La aparición de los libros plúmbeos* unearths multiple links between personal experience and the writing of history. The book enriches current discussions about humanism in the Iberian Peninsula with a learned analysis of the overlapping of social and intellectual pursuits among antiquarians, translators, and historians from both sides of the Atlantic around the time of the expulsion of the Moriscos.