

*Entre el Renacimiento y el Nuevo Mundo: Vida y obras de Hernán Pérez de Oliva (¿1494?–1531)*. Elena Pellús Pérez.

Parecos y australes: Ensayos de Cultura de la Colonia 14. Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2015. 374 pp. €29.80.

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Elena Pellús Pérez's *Entre el Renacimiento y el Nuevo Mundo* (Between the Renaissance and the New World) is a wide-ranging exposition centering on the life and works of Hernán Pérez de Oliva, the sixteenth-century Spanish humanist and literary figure. He studied at the University of Alcalá, the University of Paris, and Salamanca, and was exposed to the Italian intellectual and cultural milieu at the papal court of Leo X. He later became professor of theology and rector of the University of Salamanca, which became a venue for the innovative political and legal ideas set forth by the theologians of the Segunda Escolástica. A broad aim of Pellús Pérez's scholarly research involves

underscoring the humanist traits and concerns of Spanish intellectual life. This falls well within the aims of earlier Spanish studies, such as Juan Belda's *La Escuela de Salamanca y la Renovación de la Teología en el Siglo XVI* (2000) or J. A. Fernández Santamaría's *The State, War and Peace: Spanish Political Thought in the Renaissance, 1516-1559* (1977), books that have attempted to convey the degree to which the central tenets of the Italian Renaissance influenced or were intertwined with the theological concerns of a number of Spanish thinkers.

In this respect, Pellús Pérez's self-proclaimed pursuit in this detailed and luxuriant treatise is that of exploring the "ideological system" unifying and underlying Pérez de Oliva's variegated works, which include theatrical plays, moral-philosophical ruminations, and the ethics of the Spanish discovery of the New World. Pellús Pérez is persistent in emphasizing the humanist qualities of Pérez de Oliva's oeuvre, often comparing and contrasting it to the well-known characteristics of Italian humanism. The book is divided into three sections and corresponding chapters, which provide a coherent thematic structure to her comprehensive and, indeed, instructive overview.

The first two chapters center on a number of interrelated themes—namely, Pérez de Oliva's preoccupation with the ethics of human conduct, whose varying manifestations of good and evil construct those moral dilemmas marking the human condition itself. There is also a fundamental concern with rhetorical devices within the context of the drama of theater, and the Spanish language and grammar as a manner of communicating and educating individuals about these dilemmas. Thus, his *La Venganza de Agamenón* and *Hécuba Triste*, adaptations of Sophocles's *Electra* and Euripides's *Hecuba*, present the long-standing moral quandaries surrounding justice, avarice, and revenge. There thus emerges the humanist concern for the individual along with the Ciceronian eloquence of language as traits of Pérez de Oliva's plays. Communicating moral questions via linguistic excellence was his fundamental aim.

Section 2 centers on his philosophical thought, principally his *Diálogo de la Dignidad del Hombre* (Dialogue on the dignity of man). The thirty-page dialogue itself discusses through its two protagonists the significance of man as an artifact of divine creation drawing upon, Pellús Pérez argues, a prior Christian, Stoic, and Epicurean tradition on this question. These themes are reproduced, what is more, in the actual architectural or sculpted renderings thereof at the University of Salamanca's cloisters and principal staircase. Here we bear witness to Pérez de Oliva's attempt at illustrating, in this manner, the idea of human reason as paving the way toward virtue. The ethical themes characteristic of Pérez de Oliva's works reemerge in the final section of Pellús Pérez's book. Here she underscores his *La Historia de la Invención de las Indias* (The history of the discovery of the Indies). It is fundamentally a narrative of the discovery and conquest of the Antilles by Columbus, which is at once an exploration of the consequences of the encounter between two civilizations and a "project for the emancipation of the Spanish language." The conquest sparked in Pérez de Oliva new ethical and stylistic literary concerns, which he expressed in a number of other works discussed.

Much more deserves to be said about this study. However, suffice it to say that it is a noteworthy and far-reaching piece of scholarship on what is often an understudied subject: the Spanish reception of Renaissance humanism in an age of the emerging European state and the unfolding of empire.

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