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Nahuatl Theater. Volume 1, *Death and Life in Colonial Nahua Mexico*. Edited and translated by Barry D. Sell and Louise M. Burkhart. Foreword by Miguel León-Portilla. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004. xxviii + 337 pp., foreword, preface, acknowledgments, appendixes, references, index. \$49.95 cloth.)

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In recent years, several contributions that merge linguistic analyses with ethnohistorical and social history approaches have showcased the role played by colonial doctrinal texts as a textual arena for intellectual exchange among Christian missionaries, elite native authors, and native audiences. *Death and Life in Colonial Nahua Mexico* demonstrates that Nahuatl doctrinal theater is a genre enabling remarkable scholarly insights: it rehearsed a highly focused repertoire of moral themes drawn from early modern devotional works and was often the result of intellectual collaboration between doctrinal authors and Nahua elites trained by missionary lexicographers; it also escaped the confines of the missionary-native elite dialogue by recasting moral *exempla* so they would resonate in the social worlds of native audiences. This work is the first of four forthcoming volumes devoted to an ambitious goal—an authoritative transcription and translation of all extant colonial and nineteenth-century Nahuatl devotional plays—inspired by Fernando Horcasitas’s foundational *El teatro náhuatl* (1974). *Death and Life in Colonial Nahua Mexico*, however, is not an *aggiornamento* of Horcasitas but a critical edition directed at two groups: a broad audience, which may now approach the complex devotional world of Nahua Christians through these translations, and specialized scholars, who will benefit from precise transcriptions.

Barry Sell and Louise Burkhart reach their aim of providing a thorough, nonfacsimilar edition of these works, in spite of the difficulties posed by a corpus of mid- and late-colonial copies of seven plays of nebulous origins. For Nahuatl texts, a potential model is J. Richard Andrews and Ross Hassig’s translation of Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón’s *Tratado*, which contains a phonemic transcription showing the translators’ morphophonemic parsing and an English translation. *Death and Life in Colonial Nahua Mexico* chooses a different path: a detailed transcription reflecting common scribal practices, such as the idiosyncratic use of capitals, and the legacy of erratic punctuation marks—which native scribes, as evidenced by manuscripts ranging from Nahuatl works to the Maya books of Chilam Balam, may have absorbed from Latin imprints. The authors’ parsing of lexical items is clarified by numerous footnotes, several useful appendixes on Spanish loans, and the identification of syntactic ambiguities. The trans-

lation choices often reflect insights on Nahua cosmological principles; for instance, Burkhart renders *-yolia*, the Nahuatl term for life force, as “spirit,” while reserving the overtly Christian “soul” for the Spanish loan *ánima*.

The four analytical essays that begin this volume provide an engaging overview of the significance of Nahua devotional plays. Sell presents orthographic and morphological evidence suggesting that these seven plays were first drafted before the end of the sixteenth century—during Stage 2 (1550–1650) of James Lockhart’s three-stage analysis in a series of linguistic changes in Nahuatl texts—and proposes that they were drafted or edited by one of the most active colonial doctrinal authorship networks, composed of the Franciscan Juan Bautista Viseo and several Nahua intellectuals educated at the School of Santa Cruz Tlatelolco. Through an erudite exploration of doctrinal rhetoric on purgatory and hell, and Nahua will-making and preparations for a good death, Burkhart renders explicit the common threads between rhetoric and social practice woven deep into the fabric of five plays in this work, which depict the burden of moral decisions through Nahua characters. Daniel Mosquera highlights the economy of guilt and punishment presented in these plays, and Viviana Díaz Balsera provides a fascinating account of the ambivalent and richly hybrid depiction of Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac in the works of Juan Bautista Viseo, Juan de Mijangos, and Martín de León.

This volume is a substantial contribution to Nahuatl scholarship and points beyond some existing models of cultural hybridity toward an exacting study of the intellectual dialogues that accompanied the colonial expansion of global Christianities.

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The Time of Liberty: Popular Political Culture in Oaxaca, 1750–1850. By Peter Guardino. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005. ix + 405 pp., acknowledgments, introduction, bibliography, index. \$84.95 cloth.)

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Peter Guardino’s *The Time of Liberty* fits squarely into the field of new political history. Considering aspects of a shared political culture rather than local particularity and variation among ethnic groups, Guardino acknowledges that his work does not attempt to contribute to the field of ethnohistory. Rather, he uses the conceptual model of hegemony as a process of continuous resistance and adjustment in terms similar to those