

*Shadows over Anáhuac: An Ecological Interpretation of Crisis and Development in Central Mexico, 1730–1800.* By ARIJ OUWENEEL. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996. Maps. Tables. Figures. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xiii, 429 pp. Cloth, \$60.00.

This is a challenging book derived from a much longer work originally published in Dutch in 1989. *Shadows over Anáhuac* is an ecological interpretation of changes in the rural Indian society of the central valleys of Mexico, the earlier work's analysis of the hacienda being published elsewhere. The central core of the book is an attempt to demonstrate the applicability of the German geographer von Thünen's model to late-eighteenth-century Mexican data, an argument that population density is the key variable explaining the diversification of economic production and specialization of labor. For many this European theoretic basis will be novel, and for some the interpretations and arguments inadequately supported by the data. Few, however, will be able to ignore the book's innovative ideas and provocative findings. It provides a refreshing new insight into the colonial past.

Anáhuac of the title represents the microregion comprising the three valleys of Toluca, Mexico, and Puebla, each encompassed by rugged mountains and sloping piedmonts. Ouweneel presents a trio of critical factors that brought about a restructuring in rural society: the rapid growth of the Indian population, a series of droughts during the critical months of May and June, and the Bourbon abolition of the *repartimiento de comercio* that reinforced the crisis in the Indian communities. The author argues that the combination of these *internal* factors provides the best means of understanding the dramatic social change that characterized the region. More people meant more stress on the land; fewer opportunities for food and work triggered emigration to urban centers. The Indian elite and the Spanish hacendados met new and distinctive challenges. Ecological disruption meant land tenure and municipal organization were affected as agricultural systems, production, and trade suffered radical restructuring.

By chapter 3 the author is ready to admit that his steady stream of theoretic statements, historiographic asides, and comparative analyses is only the introduction to what becomes thereafter a text that makes for heavy going. Only Mexicanists with an urge to learn enough to agree or disagree with his findings are likely to plough through the incredible range of data that is presented to demonstrate the changing nature of the communities, their authorities, their population, their spatial structure, their charity system, their commercial integration, and their shifts towards protoindustrialization. A glance at the citations in the endnotes and bibliography reminds one that this is a work based upon prodigious research, not only capturing and integrating disparate secondary analyses but also firmly anchored in primary archival sources. As with all bold attempts there are problems; the population data is suspect since it rests on tribute counts (but who except a team of researchers can ever process the parish records?) and this means that the key variable of overpopulation remains difficult to verify, especially since we now know that it is a culturally defined construct. Equally, some may find Ouweneel's

linkage between the roles of the prehispanic Aztec lords and the eighteenth-century *gobernadores* difficult to accept. From a spatial perspective others might argue that the alleged “internalist” ecological argument advanced here for Anáhuac belies its much wider spatial integration, and the fact that the von Thünen model is nowadays seen as oversimplistic and incapable of taking into account the much more complex production surfaces that were evident even in late colonial central Mexico.

Nevertheless, the highlighting of such problems is but one of the benefits of this very impressive work. It forces readers to question their own methods of inquiry, their own often undisclosed theoretic bases. It is a landmark analysis that should become required reading in research seminars on colonial Spanish America.

DAVID J. ROBINSON, Syracuse University

*Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Religion, Art, and Feminism.* By PAMELA KIRK. New York: Continuum, 1998. Notes. Index. 180 pp. Cloth, \$34.50.

As the New World's foremost seventeenth-century literary figure, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz has stimulated the critical interest of generations of literary scholars. Surprisingly, perhaps, theologians have generally overlooked her, despite the omnipresence of religious orthodoxy—albeit at times exceptionally interpreted—in both her world and work. In *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Religion, Art, and Feminism*, Pamela Kirk has worked to bridge the gap between the two disciplines by considering the literary dimension of Sor Juana's so-called religious writings for theologians and illuminating the writer's religious framework for literary scholars. With a nonspecialized audience in mind, the author portrays Sor Juana not only as an exceptional Catholic woman and feminist but also as a surprising theological figure. The latter, an uncommon appellation for Sor Juana, stems from the author's examination of the religious components of a number of texts, including such acclaimed works as the *Respuesta a Sor Filotea de la Cruz* and her little-studied devotional exercises.

The opening and closing chapters of this book briefly recount Sor Juana's life story. Chapter 2 examines the *Neptuno alegórico* in light of political and divine power. Chapter 3 discusses the nun-writer's sacramental dramas and accompanying *loas*, with specific attention given to the role of the Eucharist in the conversion of the indigenous populations. Chapters 4 and 5 are the most insightful, as the author examines Sor Juana's distinctive interpretation of the Virgin's agency in her often overlooked devotional texts, *Ejercicios de la Encarnación* and *Ofrecimientos de los Dolores*, a position more overtly expressed in her *villancicos* (carols). The nun-writer's critique of a sermon by the Jesuit Antonio Vieira on Christ's demonstrations of love, the *Carta atenagórica*, is the subject of chapter 5. Finally, the last three chapters explore the Catholic framework of the *Respuesta*, Sor Juana's apologia, from the model of Augustine's *Confessions* to the nun-writer's *Imitatio Christi*.

Well informed of contemporary literary criticism on Sor Juana, Kirk situates her