

condenar el legado católico impartido por los misioneros sobre los indígenas. Por otra parte, este texto configura discursivamente a los actos insurgentes de los revolucionarios americanos como parte de “un proceso de maduración y asunción de representación política, crecimiento guiado por una reflexión cívica y constitucional profundas” (p. 157).

En el último tramo del trabajo realiza una lectura donde articula el lugar del letrado criollo y la torsión de las tradiciones narrativas europeas. Para ello, observa que los desvíos, apropiaciones y relecturas que realizan Mier y Lizardi de los géneros narrativos europeos los lleva a reflexionar y cuestionar el rol del letrado colonial al que presentan como desfasado o perdido en un sistema social que lo desconoce. En el apartado “El desplazamiento y la ventriloquía cultural: la traducción caribeña de Mier y Rodríguez”, me interesa señalar que el aporte de la autora radica en leer el encuentro parisino de ambos autores y la tarea compartida de la traducción le permite comprender que ambos hechos se entrelazan para ubicar ese discurso como distante de configuraciones previas tales como la búsqueda de posibles identidades nacionales o uniones trasatlánticas entre letrados criollos y europeos enfrentados a la Monarquía española. Por el contrario, el trabajo de Mier y Rodríguez consistiría en una propuesta criolla de crítica del sistema colonial peninsular por su “desconocimiento” de las riquezas culturales y naturales de América.

El libro, sin embargo, ofrece otras zonas de fecunda reflexión crítica y discusión que el lector interesado en estos cruces podrá recuperar y poner en acción. Quiero afirmar finalmente que *Letrados de la Independencia: Polémicas y discursos formadores* constituye un aporte sustantivo para el estudio de las problemáticas vinculadas a los letrados americanos en los primeros años de las independencias. Se trata de un trabajo riguroso y denso que, al tiempo que recupera una potente tradición de estudios, produce un giro teórico y metodológico sobre algunos de sus interrogantes centrales.

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MARCIA STEPHENSON. *Llamas Beyond the Andes: Untold Histories of Camelids in the Modern World*. University of Texas Press, 2023.

The domestication of llamas and alpacas in the Andean highlands 6,000 to 7,000 years ago laid the foundation for enduring human-animal relationships that would later extend across continents. In her monograph, Marcia Stephenson follows the transcontinental trajectories of these camelids through detailed case

studies, examining how they were redefined through their incorporation into scientific, imperial, and commercial enterprises.

At the core of Stephenson's project is the concept of *biogeographies* defined more specifically as "human-camelid encounters in new global arenas" (p. 4). The book explores not only the animals' lives but also their afterlives, as taxidermy, skeletons, artistic subjects, and institutional artifacts. A major strength of Stephenson's work is her interdisciplinary methodology, which draws from an expansive archive that includes colonial chronicles, travelogues, field guides, museum collections, anatomical drawings, correspondence, and paintings. Camelids are examined through the lens of intercultural contact zones and asymmetrical power relations, where knowledge was created, erased, and contested. This broad approach allows the book to recover both the visible and silenced histories embedded in camelid journeys.

Stephenson opens the narrative with the story of bezoar stones—calcified deposits found in animals' digestive systems—which became highly valued in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe for their alleged medicinal properties against poisons and severe illnesses. The unexpected Spanish discovery of bezoars in camelids in Peru in 1568 was significant not only for its economic potential but also as part of Spain's colonial rivalry with Portugal, which sourced similar stones from its Asian colonies.

For Andean Indigenous communities, however, this discovery had devastating consequences. Bezoar stones were sacred and ceremonial objects, and their removal was perceived as a threat to the community's power of regeneration. Stephenson situates bezoars within colonial "contact zones," where violence, profit, and contested knowledge-making intersected. She reveals how sacred Indigenous meanings were not only stripped away but transformed and reinterpreted within a global regime of exploitation and commercial fascination.

Building on this theme of appropriation, the narrative turns to anatomical dissection as another mechanism by which camelids were incorporated into European scientific systems. Chapter 2 explores the significance of camelids for Andean pastoral communities, highlighting how traditional practices of sacrifice served both spiritual and epistemological purposes. Knowledge of the camelid's internal body formed part of a broader ecological understanding tied to the health and regeneration of the community itself (p. 60). Specific sacrificial methods, which diverged from European norms, were targeted and prohibited by colonial campaigns of extirpation and were eventually dismissed or erased from official knowledge.

Stephenson then examines how eighteenth-century European scientists, such as Louis Feuillée of the Paris Royal Academy, anatomized camelids to construct classificatory systems compatible with Enlightenment science (p. 71). Feuillée's

descriptions became foundational reference points for later anatomists, particularly as dissection guides and manuals emerged to instruct scientific travelers. These texts detailed how to collect and preserve specimens, identifying which anatomical parts to prioritize and what kinds of data to extract in the field. Through this formalization, Stephenson states that knowledge became a tool of possession, aiding imperial expansion and contributing to the commodification of the natural world.

This transition from anatomical science to broader imperial ambition took place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as Enlightenment thinkers and imperial actors launched new acclimatization experiments. In Chapter 3, Stephenson shows how European monarchies, particularly in Spain and France, view camelids as untapped economic resources. Empress Joséphine Bonaparte's Malmaison estate serves as a vivid example: an elite site that merged animal acclimatization with scientific curiosity and visual spectacle. Chapter 4 shifts the focus to the practical and diplomatic dimensions of these ambitions. Eugène Roehn's expedition to Bolivia highlights the difficulties of acquiring animals amid geopolitical instability and local resistance. In contrast, Ecuadorian President Gabriel García Moreno's diplomatic gift of camelids to France—coordinated by Antonio Flores—illustrates a more collaborative effort. Ship logs and scientific correspondence show how knowledge was made collectively aboard ships, in remote Andean villages, and within scientific societies. Yet even these well-organized efforts succumbed to improvisation, failure, and the unpredictable agency of animals.

Stephenson gives significant attention to the role of Indigenous pastoralists, challenging narratives that portray them as spectators in colonial science. From Bolivia to France and Australia, Indigenous communities shaped camelid extraction through their refusal, negotiation, and expertise. Roehn's expedition depended on local intermediaries; García Moreno's success required Ecuadorian caretakers; and Charles Ledger's breeding efforts at Laguna Blanca in Bolivia hinged on collaboration with local shepherds. These figures not only enabled camelid transfers but also contributed to the development of new techniques in camelid husbandry. Although these are often sidelined in official records, Stephenson reads against the archival grain to recover their presence.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on Charles Ledger's attempt to establish camelid herds in Australia. Despite initial success in transporting 256 animals to Sydney, Ledger faced financial ruin and governmental abandonment. His downfall underscores a broader critique of imperial science: while colonial institutions welcomed individual initiative, they discarded actors—and animals—when ambitions proved unsustainable. Visual images such as the collection created by Santiago Savage provide historical evidence of the contingent nature of

knowledge-making in these intercultural contexts. Savage's colorful scenes give prominence to the Indigenous protagonists who participated fully in each task and in procedures developed through new techniques of camelid husbandry created by Ledger and his men. Reading Ledger's story through the contributions of Indigenous shepherds reveals the importance of the knowledge developed in the Andes, even when unrecognized by the empire.

As camelid acclimatization experiments increasingly failed, enthusiasm for such projects decreased, largely due to their high financial cost. As Pindole de la Bertoche, who once leased llamas for his property in France, remarked, "the acclimatization of llamas was of interest from the perspective of natural history and curiosity," though he could not recommend it as a fruitful or lucrative endeavor (p. 161).

Yet even as large-scale relocation projects fell out of favor, camelids did not disappear from the global imagination. Instead, they reemerged in the early twentieth century under new cultural and economic conditions: as symbols of exotic luxury. In the United States, companies used taxidermy llamas in advertisements to project a sense of authenticity, while fashion photographers increasingly incorporated live animal models into their shoots. By the 1930s, specialty textile mills had begun sourcing camelid fiber directly from Peru, producing luxury goods marketed through visual references, such as taxidermy displays and Indigenous artifacts, that suggested both origin and exoticism. These developments marked a shift from imperial acclimatization to a new phase of global camelid commodification, one rooted in aesthetics, symbolic authenticity, and the global fashion market.

Stephenson's monograph offers a nuanced contribution to the fields of environmental history, imperial science, and animal studies. Her work challenges readers to reconsider how knowledge is produced, who gets to produce it, and how animals themselves participate in history. With clarity and depth, Stephenson demonstrates that the story of camelids is not only about empire, but also about encounter, resistance, and survival. The book's interdisciplinary scope and rich archival base make it especially valuable for scholars of Latin American history, global environmental history, and science and technology studies. It would also serve well in graduate or advanced undergraduate courses focused on colonialism, biopolitics, or human-animal relations, offering students a compelling case study in how local knowledge and global ambition intersect in the making of scientific and commercial empires.

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