

Historia de la Nueva México, 1610.

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Gaspar Pérez de Villagr . *Historia de la Nueva M xico*, 1610. Trans. & Ed. Miguel Encinias, Alfred Rodr guez and Joseph P. S nchez. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992. Pp. xliii + 367, historical overview, illustrations, map, notes, appendices, index. \$45.00 cloth.

This bilingual edition of Gaspar P rez de Villagr 's *Historia de la Nueva M xico* inaugurated the University of New Mexico Press' *Pas  por aqu * series which is "dedicated to the restoration of New Mexico's Hispano, Mexican American, Chicano literary tradition" (xv) from the Spanish colonial period to the present. To date, eight other books have appeared in the series. It is fitting that the *Historia de la Nueva M xico* (1610) was the first since Gaspar P rez de Villagr  (1555?-1620) was one of the first Europeans to pass through the region and since, according to the volume's editors, his epic poem is "the first published history of New Mexico" (xviii). Villagr 's *Historia* deals with Don Juan de O ate's founding expedition (1595-1601) in which the author participated. Included in this edition is a useful "historical overview" of O ate's *entrada* which significantly expanded the Spanish colonial enterprise northward.

Overall, Villagr  appears more interested in accurately reporting the events of O ate's expedition than in their poetic expression. Thus, the *Historia* as a whole has more historical value than artistic worth. The one notable exception in Villagr 's factual chronicling is the narrative of the *Mexicah's* origins (Cantos I and II). This legend of migration takes on an epic flavor as it involves "many soldiers and well armed" (7). Moreover, the allegation that the foundational journey was inspired by "a valiant and cunning demon" (9) echoes the evangelical mindset which fueled the Spanish colonial enterprise.

What makes this edition of Villagr 's *Historia* especially attractive is the parallel English translation of the Spanish poem. The only previous adaptation was a prose rendering by Gilberto Espinoza originally published in 1933. The present text revises an unpublished translation in verse done by Fayette S. Curtis in the late 1920's. True to the

Spanish original, the English lines accurately capture the rhythm and the feel of Villagr 's poem. The two column presentation will allow readers with a limited knowledge of Spanish to compare the two versions with relative ease. Regrettably, only the English lines are numbered and, due in part to the layout, do not always match the Spanish ones. For those interested in the translation process, the appendix showing the modified lines from Curtis' original English version will prove particularly interesting.

The critical apparatus includes two sets of footnotes, one for each version of the poem. While the notes in Spanish include glosses of archaic terms, both sets provide contextual and referential details. The context and reference notes, however, are not always the same in both versions. Although they are not necessarily crucial for understanding the poem, the reader working exclusively with either the Spanish original or the English translation will not have access to all the offered information. It is also unfortunate that the editors decided to exclude most of the paratextual materials (editorial tax, errata, censor approvals, licensures, dedication to the king, and prologue). Far from superfluous, these missing pages constitute an indispensable framework for any text of the period, especially for one like Villagr 's which is valuable mainly as a historical document.

Because of its early date and its theme, the *Historia* undoubtedly helps to underscore the deep Hispanic heritage of the southwestern United States. The editors insist several times on the fact that the poem predates John Smith's *General History of Virginia* by at least fourteen years (xviii) and see it "both in literary and historical terms" as "the very cornerstone of our common [New Mexican] edifice" (xxiii). But while this text may serve in the affirmation of Hispano—Mexican American, Chicano—identity, it is important to keep in mind that the Villagr 's *Historia* also reflects an imperial thrust which, like the later Anglo colonization, exerted a heavy human and cultural toll on Native Americans. The "Indian peoples" were not, as a token statement claims, "the heroic co-protagonists of the epic narration" (xxiii); they were, for the most part, victims of a series of violent conquests.