The Story of Guadalupe: Luis Laso de la Vega’s Huei tlamauhicoltica of 1649.
Edited and translated by LISA SOUSA, STAFFORD POOLE, C.M., and JAMES LOCKHART.

Ever since the mid-seventeenth century, the account of miraculous revelations bestowed upon a humble Nahuatl by a dark-skinned Virgin Mary has captured the collective consciousness of what we have come to call Mexico. Through a brilliant and exacting examination of the sources, composition, lexical features, and contrasting registers of language of the earliest printed Nahuatl-language account about the Guadalupan apparitions (1649), this deceivingly slender volume significantly advances our understanding of the emergence and editorial consolidation of such a compelling narrative. Furthermore, the authors’ lucid translation, which runs alongside the Nahuatl text, makes the entire text available to English-speaking audiences for the first time.

For the benefit of a broad audience of specialists and history students, the authors have prepared a modernized version of the Nahuatl imprint that retains some fæsolinar characteristics—the original orthography, typographical divisions, and diacritics—but improves upon them by using contemporary word spacing and thematic paragraphs. Even though the interpretation of the text’s unsystematic diacritics and orthography may challenge less-experienced students of Nahuatl, the authors’ appraisal of these issues on pages 28—35 not only addresses this difficulty, but also stands on its own as a critical tool for mystified readers of midcolonial Nahuatl imprints and manuscripts.

The authors settled on a highly idiomatic English translation policy rather than on a more literal but somewhat belabored approach. The major point of contention that a literalist approach would raise concerns the handling of reverential forms. Even if translating the ubiquitous reverential suffix -tzin would give most readers a headache, translating the reverential forms of verbal phrases—both reflexive (marked by the affix -tzinoa) and nonreflexive (marked by the otherwise reflexive prefix mo)—would have illustrated to readers of various competences the selective deployment of this Nahuatl discursive convention. Throughout the text, Juan Diego merely hears and sees, while the Virgin designates to see and kindly hears. This reverential distinction is invisible in the authors’ translation.

Is Huei tlamauhicoltica the product of a Nahuatl-creole collaborative project? Little is known about its author beyond the fact that in 1649 he was chaplain and vicar of Tepeyac’s Guadalupe chapel in 1649. Nonetheless, the authors offer an exhaustive analysis of internal evidence about contrasting registers of language in the text—on the one hand, standard ecclesiastical Nahuatl; on the other, mundane and even dialectal features. While much of the text reports elaborate rhetorical exchanges, usage of the variants múa (much) and -ta (past modal auxiliary) betrays a less-educated register; moreover, morphological and syntactical slips and Nahuatl calques from Spanish suggest a non-native intuition at work. Given the various interpretations supported by this evi-
dence, the authors propose, rather than conclude, that a “Guadalupe Nahua Project” featuring Luis La Sa de la Vega and one or more highly educated Nahua assistants composed the *Huei tlamahuiciotlca*.

This Guadalupe team would have collected material from previously existing oral, written, and pictorial apparition accounts, some still unknown and others well attested—like Miguel Sánchez’s 1648 Spanish-language narrative and Samuel Stradanus’s early-seventeenth-century engraving, therewith arriving at a grand total of 14 miracle stories. Given the omnivorous tendencies of seventeenth-century authors of Nahua doctrinal texts, this work may reflect the compilation of rather diverse written and oral sources, which could have begun well before the 1649 publication date. Although the question of sources must remain open for lack of data, the authors’ tour de force demonstrates that the contrast between La Sa de la Vega’s eloquent, exhaustive, and compelling narrative and Sánchez’s terser Spanish-language publication accounts for the prominent role that *Huei tlamahuiciotlca* has played in the development of a standard narrative about the Guadalupan apparitions.

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The work of nineteenth-century women writers in Latin America has been a long neglected subject, and Adriana Méndez Rodenas’s *Gender and Nationalism in Colonial Cuba: The Travels of Santa Cruz y Montalvo, Condesa de Merlin* makes a significant contribution to this steadily growing field. This book, a study of the life and work of María de las Mercedes Santa Cruz y Montalvo, known as the Condesa de Merlin, combines literary criticism and literary history with the goal of making a place for this largely overlooked and complex figure in the Latin American literary canon. The biographical details of her life illustrate Merlin’s status as a colonial “hybrid” and hence elucidate her unique authorial position, which Méndez Rodenas correctly asserts as imperative to understandings of her written work. Merlin, born in Cuba in 1789, emigrated to Spain with her family when she was 13 years old. The expulsion of the French from Spain in 1812 forced Merlin and her husband, a French count, to move to Paris, where she established a prominent literary salon. Following the death of her husband in 1839, which left her in precarious financial circumstances, she returned to Cuba, seeking to secure an inheritance from her father, who was a member of the Cuban sugar aristocracy. After mounting an unsuccessful legal battle against her brother over ownership of a sugar mill, Merlin pursued other means of earning money by publishing in French the three-volume *La Habana* and an abbreviated Spanish translation entitled *Viaje a la Habana*, which are the primary texts considered in Méndez Rodenas’s study.