Joaquín Álvarez Barrientos has recently done much to highlight the puzzling neglect of America in the eighteenth-century Spanish novel. Admittedly, it is something of an anomaly that the fresh attention focused on the New World as a result of the eighteenth-century crisis in Euro-imperialism was met with “relativo silencio” in novelistic Spanish literature of the same period (42). Probing further this neglect, Barrientos claims that “no hay novelas sobre la expansión ultramarina española …, actitud que contrasta con la de países como Francia o Inglaterra que sí crearon una ficción sobre sus colonias y posesión, como modo de asentar su implantación mundial” (42). A notable exception to his contention is Pedro Montengón’s pedagogical novel Eusebio. Published in four parts between 1786 and 1788, it draws explicitly on Voltaire’s Quaker “republic” by choosing Pennsylvania, “un utópico paraíso cuáquero”, as the setting for the rescue of the novel’s protagonist Eusebio (García-Sáez 285). A

1 It must be remembered that Spain was still the largest colonial power in the world at this time.

2 This is not to deny the centrality of America to other literary genres in eighteenth-century Spain. As Joaquín Álvarez Barrientos points out, when America is mentioned “fue para defenderse y ofrecer descripciones de lugares, de fauna, flora, etc.” (42). This is visible in the “widely read travel geographies, letters, journeys and memoirs” of the Jesuits (Adams 56), which Tietz describes as providing a “saber hispanoamericanista de primera categoria” (Tietz 615). Important, also, were the "viajes ilustrados." Commissioned by Carlos III, the expeditions enabled Spanish explorers to gather “minuciosa descripción de los lugares visitados, las condiciones sociales, económicas y políticas de sus habitantes” (Abad y Lasierra [unpaginated]). For a discussion of Jesuit accounts of the New World, see Batllori (1966). For further details of Spain’s scientific expeditions to America during the eighteenth century, see Lafuente (1987) and Hilton (1987).

3 In view of the new Enlightenment values of justice, liberty and reason, Voltaire attempts to redefine America by reworking Montaigne’s myth of the noble savage and relocating it to the Quaker settlement of Pennsylvania. This he identifies in “Lettre IV” of the Lettres philosophiques as the new Golden Age: “Guillaume Penn pouvait se vanter d’avoir apporté sur la terre l’âge d’or dont on parle tant, et qui n’a
Spaniard of noble birth, Eusebio is shipwrecked and orphaned off the coast of Maryland at the age of six. He is later rescued by a Quaker couple, Henrique and Susana Myden, who take him to live with them on their plantation settlement near Philadelphia.

Although both the eighteenth-century treatment of Pennsylvania as an enlightened utopia and the reinvention of the intrepid conquistador were commonplace in Enlightenment Europe, their prominence in *Eusebio* were, as Pedro Santonja reveals, “un caso insólito en las letras españolas” (205). Not surprisingly, the heterodoxy of the novel’s Quaker setting quickly attracted the attention of the Inquisition, which banned *Eusebio* in 1798 after repeated complaints criticizing Montengón for “aparte de su alumno Eusebio toda idea de Religión con mayor afectación que el impío Rousseau en su detestable Emilio; … y también … por la propensión que se manifiesta constantemente a la reprobada secta de los cuáqueros” (García Lara 126). Yet although enthusiastically received by its Spanish readers – Ángel González Palencia describes it as “una de las novelas que más boga tuvieron a finales del siglo XVIII” (343) – *Eusebio*’s popularity was short-lived and barely extended beyond Montengón’s own lifetime. With the exception of the allegorical readings of García-Sáez and Jorge Chen Sham, no sustained analysis of the novel’s American setting, or of Montengón’s use of the Quaker tradition, has been undertaken to date. It is the aim of this analysis to redress the critical neglect of *Eusebio* by re-reading it through the politico-colonial lens of Enlightenment Europe. For it is clear that in spite of the peculiarly ahistorical bias of previous studies, *Eusebio* does engage with the socio-political and cultural realities of its time through the distinctly eighteenth-century flavor of several of the novel’s key episodes.4

This is particularly evident during Hardyl and Eusebio’s Grand Tour of Europe. In London, for example, they overhear a group in a café discussing Spain’s current “letargo” (Part II. Book IV):

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4 Although it may seem that such a reading is compromised by the novel’s seventeenth-century setting – Nigel Glendinning suggests that it begins circa 1679 – it is clear that his predating has more to do with ensuring the protection of the novel against the Spanish censors than with any genuine concern with seventeenth-century America or Europe. See Glendinning (2004).
Por mí, duerman cuanto quieran, … pero es cosa que saca de tino que una nación imperiosa que acababa de amedrentar a toda la Europa, haya caído en tal letargo y tan universal que todo se resiente de esa misma desidia: ciencias, artes, comercio, náutica, agricultura, en fin, todo. (499) 

Such comments bear more than an echo of the derisive entry made by Masson de Morvilliers in the *Encyclopédie méthodique* on "Espagne", in 1782. His account of Spain, in which he asks the inflammatory question, “¿Qué se debe a España? Después de dos siglos, después de cuatro, después de diez, ¿qué ha aportado a Europa?” (qtd. in Cañas Murillo 24), led to an “insidiosa polémica” (Alonso Moreno 89) in Spain as Spanish intellectuals scrambled to defend the country’s colonial record in the face of European criticism. This polemic marked the culmination of a century of anti-Spanish rhetoric which saw prominent Enlightenment thinkers such as Montesquieu, Voltaire, Raynal and Diderot debate the legitimacy of Spain’s American conquest and speculate on whether it would have been better if the New World had never been discovered at all. The conversation overheard by Hardyl and Eusebio in London, points not only to Montengón’s fictional treatment of Enlightenment disputes over the legitimacy of Spain’s New World conquest in the novel, but also places it squarely, as Jeanne Issac Dupony claims, within the “insidiosa polémica” that emerged as a result:  

En 1786 *Eusebio* est aussi une réponse aux propos injurieux de Masson de Morvilliers qui, dans l’*Encyclopédie méthodique*, prétend que l’Espagne depuis deux siècles, depuis quatre, depuis dix, n’a rien fait pour l’Europe. (1575) 

If, as Barrientos claims, America barely enters Spanish literature in the eighteenth century, it is clear that when it is mentioned it is often with the most cursory and totalizing references. Yet, despite the wealth of factual information that existed by then on America, the most superficial knowledge continued to be used in literary representations of the New World. Forming a vague, marginally visible presence, writers frequently drew on sixteenth-century rhetoric of religious and heroic military conquest in their descriptions of America. Yet what distinguishes

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5 All quotes are taken from García Lara’s 1998 edition of *Eusebio* which is based on the original version of the novel published in 1788.

6 Notably, Juan Pimentel also describes the polemic over Spain’s New World discovery as “especialmente virulenta en el último tercio del siglo XVIII” (263).

7 See the traditional heroic-military rhetoric used in Nuño’s account of Hernán Cortés’s conquest of Mexico in *Carta IX* of Cadalso’s *Cartas marruecas*. Further
Montengón’s treatment of America from that of his contemporaries is the spatial verisimilitude of his particularized North American setting among the Pennsylvanian Quakers, a specificity which is reinforced throughout by the novel’s frequent references to concrete American locations – Philadelphia, Salem, Florida, Quebec, New Jersey and Virginia are all mentioned. It is clear that America exists in Eusebio as a space in its own right. In fact, it is the New World which frames the entire novel, opening as it does with Eusebio’s shipwreck off the coast of Maryland and closing with the return of Eusebio and his wife Leocadia to settle permanently in Pennsylvania. The letters Eusebio receives from Myden during his Grand Tour (Pt II, Bk II; Pt III, Bk II) and his (Eusebio’s) frequent references to his life back in America do much to underline the centrality of America: “¡Oh, cuánto más valía haber quedado en Filadelfia … que no haber emprendido un viaje que tan desastrado fin deberá tener!” (705). More significant still is the direction of travel in Eusebio: Montengón’s geographical shift from Europe to America is a parodic reversal of eighteenth-century New World travel which was typically from the Old World to the New. In Eusebio, however, the Old World becomes the "New" and the "Old" the "New". Notably, it is only after Hardyl and Eusebio’s arrival in Europe that Hardyl describes Europe as “un nuevo mundo” (316).

It is, nonetheless, true that despite the greater geographical concreteness of America in the novel, descriptions of Pennsylvania still retain something of the vagueness characteristic of earlier New World rhetoric. This is particularly evident when Eusebio’s nebulous American geography is compared with the later minute and vivid descriptions of Europe (Part II). In Europe, Montengón creates bustling scenes with vociferous and energetic crowds. Often prominent landmarks are identified in the cities Hardyl and Eusebio visit during their Grand Tour. In London he names “el Puente de Westminster”, “la plaza de Spittlefields” and “la cárcel de Newgate” (Pt II, Bk I). Philadelphia, by contrast, is more schematically drawn. It lacks the physical and material descriptions of European life; people and places are

examples are found in the countless number of epic poems written on Hernán Cortés’s conquest of Mexico during the eighteenth century. Spanish epic poets such as Francisco Ruiz de León, José María Vaca de Guzmán, Nicolás Fernández de Moratín and Juan de Escoiquiz, typically drew on the patriotic and conservative poetics characteristic of the genre in order to defend Spain’s American conquest as a heroic and religious enterprise.

8 Leocadia and her family live in Salem. Florida is mentioned in Jacobo Camder’s description of his arrival in America (92), while Boston and Delaware are referred to as departure and arrival points from Europe. Brief references are also found to Virginia (144) and New Jersey (264).
referred to generically rather than specifically. The town square is described simply as “la plaza” (125), while the people Eusebio encounters as he moves through the city are identified as an amorphous and anonymous mass: “los conocidos” (116). While this may be so, the role of America in Eusebio is not rendered any less important as a result of the conceptual nature of its American setting. Montengón, it should be pointed out, was not interested merely in reflecting reality in his description of the New World. On the contrary, by subordinating space to character and character to morality, he chose to create meaning by exploiting the moral dimensions of both. American space may not be very real in Eusebio, but it is real enough to provide a firm ground for Montengón to construct a new social and political vision for both the Old and New worlds.

Dialectical Geographies: America as a Vehicle for the Social Critique of European Society

In Eusebio, America functions first and foremost as a framework for the displaced social and cultural criticism of Europe. Indeed, it is in an effort to heighten the novel’s critique of European society that Montengón, recognizing “la necesidad de ubicar la ficción en lugares caracterizados por ser tierra de promisión y de tolerancia religiosa” (Chen Sham 330), draws on the utopian impulse characteristic of Voltaire’s Quaker myth and exploits it in order to reshape Europe by promoting American society as a viable alternative. In view of the parallels that exist in the depiction of the New World in the accounts of both Voltaire and Montengón, it seems likely that Montengón drew upon Voltaire’s Quaker utopia in his decision to set Eusebio against the backdrop of the Quaker colony of Pennsylvania. Throughout the novel, Montengón reproduces several aspects of the French myth. In the first instance, Henrique and Susana Myden, who together with their servants help to rescue the shipwrecked Eusebio and his servant Gil Altano, embody the benevolence, humanity and egalitarianism characteristic of Voltaire’s Quakers:

Penetrados de compasión los ánimos de aquellos buenos cuáqueros, dan voces a sus criados para que salgan a la playa a sacar a aquel infeliz de los brazos de la muerte. Ellos mismos, no sufriendo su corazón dejar de tener parte en obra tan misericordiosa, ayudan a sus criados a echar el esquife al agua. (88)

The eighteenth-century vogue for travellers tales and the use of such tales to provide a displaced satirical attack of Europe was commonplace in Enlightenment literature. Prominent examples include Montesquieu’s Lettres persanes (1721), Oliver Goldsmith’s Citizen of the World; or, Letters from a Chinese Philosopher (1760-61) and José Cadalso’s Cartas marruecas (1774).
Later descriptions of the Mydens as the “libertadores” of Eusebio and Altano (88) reinforce the ideal of liberty considered central to eighteenth-century accounts of Penn’s Quaker colony. Also evident is Voltaire’s idea of the Quakers as “les plus respectable de tous les hommes” (“Essai sur les moeurs [CLIII]” 384). In his initial description of Henrique Myden, Montengón focuses primarily on Henrique’s exemplary moral virtue—he is an “honrado cuáquero” whose “bondadoso genio todo se le asentaba, trasluciéndosele en la risueña amabilidad de su rostro el generoso desinterés y la blanda facilidad de su alma” (88). Montengón champions the rural virtue of the Quakers as a model for society to imitate. He reflects Quaker insistence on “la simplicité et l’égalité” (“Essai sur les moeurs [CLIII]” 383) in his descriptions of Myden’s household as “sin ostentación y el aseo de un rico cuáquero sin lujo” (90). Furthermore, his enthusiastic support for Quaker altruism challenges traditional paradigms of New World representation which see America as synonymous with wealth and mercenary ambition. Montengón is keen, however, to emphasize that material wealth has no place in a society such as Pennsylvania where virtue is the only commodity of value. This he makes explicit by the loss of wealth of all those who try to enter America with it. The example of John Bridge, who flees England after murdering Lord Ut’s son, makes this point clear: “llevaba conmigo caudal considerable para esperar muy holgadamente mayor fortuna; mas ésta … aunque me dio feliz navegación, no quiso que gozase de mi tesoro, sepultándolo en el mar cuando ya tocábamos el puerto” (131). Thus, arriving in Quebec, “pobre y arruinado” (131), he quickly discovers that in “un país que no sufre los ociosos” (152), it is necessary to “emplearse en algún oficio” (132). Built on industry and thrift, Montengón reveals a society where European status structures have no currency. In America nobles must work, and Eusebio soon becomes a basket weaver. It is notable, too, that Eusebio and Leocadia must first be stripped of their inheritance before they can return to settle permanently in America at the end of the novel: “quedaban adjudicadas al fisco las haciendas y demás bienes confiscados para el rey” (989). For in a society rooted in equality rather than economic or social distinction, it is only when they are “semejantes a aquellos que, tragados del mar con sus riquezas”, that the ocean “los arroja el mismo a una playa donde encuentra un tesoro mayor que el que perdieron, y suelo fértil y delicioso donde con su frondosidad y abundancia los alivia y recrea” (991).

In Eusebio, Montengón exploits the novel’s dialectical geographies by casting Pennsylvania as the embodiment of virtue and Europe as the embodiment of vice. Europe is a “Babilonia” (438), “un mundo de anarquía pasional” (García-Sáez 278). In contrast to Pennsylvania, everywhere Hardyl and Eusebio look in Europe they see only degeneration, violence and corruption. Their impression is of a political and cultural landscape which is to be scorned, not admired. Indeed, after their arrival in
England, Hardyl tellingly remarks to Eusebio that while in Pennsylvania he has been removed from “la malicia, los engaños y las perversas pasiones terribles” (317) endemic to European society. It is also significant that the only vice encountered in Pennsylvania is at the hands of Europeans who, if not transformed by the example they see of Quaker virtue, will by the end of the novel have returned to Europe.

As part of Eusebio’s searing indictment of European society, Montengón contrasts the Quaker disregard for social and economic distinctions with the elaborate social structures of Europe. The countless references made to titled figures in Europe – Sir Bridway, Lord Hams and Lord Som – is a reminder that this is a society organized by hierarchies and inherited privilege, not by social equality. In Europe men are not born equal: John Bridge, it is revealed, “había nacido rico y noble” (337), while Gil Altano states: “Yo naci para marino” (92). At the top of this static European society is the nobility, a class Montengón condemns as a sybaritic minority, degenerate and worldly. Criticizing their arrogance, “estos tales quieren ser mirados como deidades ante cuya arrogancia deben postrar sus frentes todos los demás” (639), Montengón berates their indolence for the ensuing neglect of European agriculture, a neglect which he contrasts unfavorably with the sustained efforts of Pennsylvanian farmers like Myden: “Pasaron a Valladolid, causándoles compasión los campos yermos por donde pasaban, faltos de verdura y de frondosidad, echando de menos la industria y cultivo que tanto los embelesaba” (733). Yet as Hardyl and Eusebio’s Grand Tour reveals, the nobility is not the only European institution which is found wanting. In England, Montengón uncovers a judicial system whereby “el uso normal del poder” is “la satisfacción de sus propias pasiones” (García-Sáez 279). Elena Bridway despair at ever receiving justice after the man who raped her, Colonel Kirke, is awarded a peerage, despite his “atroces maldades y desafueros” (355). This contrasts sharply with the “confianza” Leocadia expresses in “la más incorrupta justicia” of the Quakers (160). Not only are European institutions shown to be corrupt, but they are repressive and autocratic as well. In Europe, women struggle under oppressive and perverse male structures which harbor the continual threat of physical force. Don Julián’s refusal to allow his daughter to marry don Fernando is a particularly salient example of parental despotism and patriarchal abusiveness. Gabriela exclaims:

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10 This is confirmed by the departure from America of all those guilty of vice. The Portuguese surgeon who poses as the estranged son of Miss Rimbol in order to claim her inheritance returns to England after his swindle is revealed (Pt. I Bk. II). Similarly, Orme escapes to England after his attempted rape of Leocadia (Pt. I Bk. V).
¡Oh cielos!, ¿es posible que ella [su condenación] me haya de venir de mis mismos padres? ¡Desventurada de mí! ¡Querer sacrificar de todos los modos la sola libertad interior que me queda! ¡Privarme no solo de los que más amo, sino forzarme también en tomar un estado que aborrezco! (737)

In France, Montengón decries against the enslaving hysteria and superstition engendered by the miracles professed at the graveside of a Jansenist deacon (Pt III. Bk II), and later condemns the “furioso fanatismo” of French Calvinists who, guided by “la violencia de su ciego y odioso celo”, kill a Catholic priest for enclosing the daughters of a recent convert to Calvinism in a monastery (710). This he contrasts with “la benigna y discreta tolerancia” (540-41) of the Mydens. Presuming Eusebio to be Catholic, they decide not to raise him as a Quaker: “Determinaron acostumbrarlo a sus usos y al traje sencillo de cuáquero, pero no pudiendo dudar que Eusebio era católico, temieron violentar su voluntad y entendimiento si lo inducían a profesar su misma religión cuáquera, vedándoselo la tolerancia” (90).

Throughout the novel, Montengón is keen to emphasize that in spite of the repressiveness of European mores and social institutions, Europe is no more peaceful or moral as a result. On the contrary, the violent repression of European society breeds only further violence, which, in turn, must be contained within an extensive, punitive justice system. In contrast, no such measures of social control are needed in Philadelphia where the Quaker reliance on virtue and reason is not repressive but liberating and life-giving.

Although Voltaire may well have considered it “un grand problème de savoir si l’Europe a gagné en se portant en Amérique” (“Essai sur les mœurs” 364), Montengón, it would seem, had no such reservations. Through the unquestioned hegemony and superiority of American society throughout Eusebio, it is evidently Europe which Montengón reveals has lessons to learn from America. Championing the Quaker utopia as representing a better order, he holds it up as a viable model for Europe to imitate. In fact, the reader could easily imagine Montengón apostrophizing America in much the same way as Goethe would do forty years later: “America, you are better off than our old continent” (“Sprüche” 124). Yet once the New World conquest is affirmed as a positive event in European history, Montengón, eager to counter French suspicions that America’s discovery was the greatest misfortune humanity had ever suffered, determines to make Spain the author of “esta gloria” rather than its scapegoat: “Me dijo que … creía deberse atribuir a muchas causas, tomando el origen desde el descubrimiento del nuevo mundo; el cual, excitando la envidia general de todas las naciones, por querer cada uno para sí esta gloria que les parecía usurpada” (505).
Montengón’s use of Voltaire’s Quaker utopia as a means of defending Spain’s American conquest posits an important break away from two centuries of New World rhetoric which had traditionally endorsed Spain’s American conquest in a paternalistic, heroic and providential light. Common to such accounts of the Spanish American conquest are the stereotypical portraits of brutish savages whose cruelty and barbarity justified Spanish excesses by casting it as a civilizing New World mission. Montengón, however, aware of the incongruity of celebrating the conquest of America as an heroic military enterprise in a century which promoted the ideals of reason, justice and peace, chooses not to rely on such mythifying legitimating ideologies of empire, but to update Spain’s conventional recourse to the heroic mode of myth by drawing on Enlightenment utopias and eighteenth-century reinventions of the myth of noble savagery.

**Montengón’s Parodic Reversal of the Quaker Ideal**

Montengón’s reliance on Voltaire’s Quaker utopia as a means of heightening his criticism of European society underlines the centrality of the Quaker myth to any understanding of *Eusebio*. Nevertheless, Montengón’s use of Voltaire’s social idyll is not a slavish reproduction but a sophisticated reworking of the original French myth. Montengón clearly understood that if the myth was to have any relevance for an eighteenth-century Spanish leadership, its reinvention was crucial. He therefore ‘hispanizes’ Voltaire’s myth of Pennsylvania by peopling his Quaker colony with Spanish personalities, and by highlighting the Spanish identity of the novel’s protagonists, Hardyl, Eusebio and Leocadia:

> Es siempre dulce la satisfacción de verse los patriotas en países extranjeros [...]. Leocadia aunque sabía la lengua inglesa, no había olvidado la propia, hablando siempre en ella con sus padres; y

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11 It is important to point out that Montengón does draw on popular Renaissance stereotypes of the New World early in the novel. That said, the interpolated episode which charts John Bridge’s encounter with American Indians (Pt I. Bk II). This, however, has more to do with satisfying the demands of the eighteenth-century reader for dangerous, adventurous and exotic tales.

12 It is important to note that not everyone chose to follow Voltaire and to relocate the myth of noble savagery to a Quaker colony. Rousseau, for example, relocated it to childhood, see *Emile* (1762). Yet whatever the reorientation of the myth the purpose in each case was the same: to satirize the barbarity and corruption of the European socio-political system and its supposed norms of "civility".
sabiéndola bien Eusebio, tenía mayor motivo de complacer a su amoroso genio. (266)

Nevertheless, Montengón’s desire to secure the interest of the Spanish reader in his "American" novel is not the only reason for his strategic manipulation of the French myth; rather it is inextricably linked with his desire to use the novel as a means of defending Spain’s American conquest against the type of European derision epitomised by Morvilliers’ mordant remarks on Spain’s pitiful contribution to Europe. This he does by exposing the shortcomings of Henrique and Susana’s Quaker colony. Montengón may champion the virtues of Quakerism, but he also upends them. It is, paradoxically, Henrique Myden who Montengón chooses as the mouthpiece for Quaker hypocrisy:

Verdad es que oímos cada día estas lecciones de moderación, de humillación, de desprecio de la vanidad, que nos dan los predicantes; pero como sólo son consejos generales que nos ponen en necesidad de acostumbrarse a su ejercicio, y tampoco convencen nuestra voluntad, alabamos sus sermones y obramos diversamente; pues estoy persuadido que tales consejos de nada aprovechan, o aprovechan sólo por momentos, si primero no se quitan del ánimo y de la voluntad los estorbos que no los dejan arraigar en ella. (178-79)

Like Myden, Montengón calls into question the celebrated virtues of Quaker simplicity and purity by highlighting Henrique and Susana’s ironic aversion to Eusebio’s moral education, an education which sought to cultivate the very virtues the Quakers were meant to exemplify. When Henrique Myden learns that Hardyl will instruct Eusebio in virtue, he asks: “¿De qué sirve cuando solo el proceder debe caracterizar al hombre?” (97-98) The skepticism he expresses undermines any notion of Quaker disinterest and social equality, revealing instead that the economic inequality and status structures typical of Europe are to be found in Pennsylvania as well. Moreover, Myden’s outrage that Hardyl should ask Eusebio to carry baskets through the streets of Philadelphia – “se tuvo por burlado de el cuáquero que se lo propuso, y movido de este mismo resentimiento, le dijo: ¿Son esos los estudios que queréis dar a Eusebio?” (100) – make it clear that the Quakers are equally guilty of the vanity and pride which Montengón will later single out for criticism in Europe. In the case of Susana Myden, her hostility to the Quaker virtues of humility and disinterest is no less pronounced. Although described as “piadosa predicanta de su secta”, she cannot accept Eusebio’s decision to

13 Dupony also highlights the "hispanization" of the novel’s North American setting in his comment that its characters “plongent leurs racines dans la profondeur d’un passé hispanique” (1578).
become a basket weaver and instead sets out to actively discourage it. Montengón also criticises the excessive wealth of the Quakers. In the case of the Mydens, their estate is so extensive that it will take the time needed for Hardyl and Eusebio to complete their Grand Tour for Myden to organize his affairs: “no siendo de fácil condición por la vasta extensión de sus intereses en países extranos, dejaba tiempo bastante para que Eusebio hiciese su viaje” (302). Contrary to initial reports of Myden’s sobriety and thrift, Montengón later exposits his indolence. He criticizes Myden for retiring wealthy at the expense of developing a genuine and supportive community on the land he had settled. Eusebio’s incredulity at the discovery of Black slaves (Alil Tagúl and his family) on Myden’s colony is a further indictment of Myden’s colonial practices (Pt IV. Bk III). Eusebio condemns such activities for their exploitation of powerless African slaves purely for monetary gain: “Tomó ocasión de esto Eusebio para hacer ver a Henrique Myden el abuso del poder del hombre sobre el hombre su semejante, adquirido solamente al precio del metal contra todos los derechos de la humanidad” (887). Nevertheless, Montengón is keen in this instance to distance Spain from any involvement in the African slave trade by his repeated insistence that Eusebio had no knowledge or involvement in Myden’s purchase of African slaves: “lo compró Henrique Myden en tiempo en que Eusebio se hallaba ausente de la América” (888).

Yet once Voltaire’s myth of a Quaker utopia has been successfully punctured, Montengón sets out to demonstrate how the shortcomings of the Mydens are compensated for by the virtues exemplified by Hardyl and Eusebio. This is an audacious step. For in holding up two Spaniards, Hardyl and Eusebio, as the real architects of the Enlightenment utopia of Pennsylvania, Montengón superimposes an explicitly Spanish framework onto the French myth of Quaker virtue. Throughout the novel Montengón continually inverts the terms of the original French myth by casting Hardyl as the paragon of Quaker virtue and the Quakers, Henrique and Susana Myden, as his imitators: “sus ánimos quedaron penetrados del superior carácter que Hardyl descubría” (105). In fact, it seems unlikely that Montengón would have wished his treatment of the Quaker myth in Eusebio to be read in any way other than as a parodic reversal of the original French myth. Early in the novel’s first chapter Eusebio is heralded as a “nuevo Moisés” (88), a term significant not only for its religious association with heavenly election, deliverance and the Promised Land, but also because it was as a “nuevo Moisés” that the sixteenth-century theologian Gerónimo de Mendieta had described Hernán Cortés two centuries

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14 This is particularly significant in terms of the novel’s rhetoric of defence.
earlier. Locating Eusebio within a tradition that dates back to the first Spanish chroniclers of the New World, Montengón reinvents Eusebio as a new, "enlightened" Cortés, a Quaker like William Penn himself rather than the conventional military war hero. It is clear that Eusebio's heroism—democratic and peaceful—is clearly more in keeping with the Enlightenment ideologies of his time. Indeed, it is highly significant that Pennsylvania, a colony synonymous with regeneration should be chosen as the location for Spain's reconquest of the New World. For as the French Jesuit missionary Kelkil points out to John Bridge (Pt 1 Bk. II), Pennsylvania and Virginia are the only places that he (Bridge) will find atonement and peace: “Procuró consolarme el misionero, diciéndome que si vivía disgustado con aquella vida, podía ir a la Virginia o a la Pensilvania” (144). As a result, Hardyl and Eusebio's overhaul of Myden's colony in Pennsylvania is thus set up as a "redemptive" reconquest which seeks atonement for the “fatales consecuencias” (144) of Spain's earlier conduct in the New World.

Further evidence of Montengón's inversion of Voltaire's Quaker myth is seen in the structural parallels set up between Spain's discovery and conquest of the New World and Hardyl and Eusebio's settlement and reform of Myden's Quaker colony. Their corrective colonial practices, which redress the neglect and mismanagement of Myden's estate—“diese nueva forma a las haciendas que el descuido de Henrique Myden tenía abandonadas y en gran parte incultas” (297)—emphasize cultivation and production. Hardyl is keen to harness the agricultural potential of the land and to move away from the practices of wealthy landowners, like Myden, who accumulated huge tracts of land with little interest in its cultivation or development. Hardyl's "enlightened" reverence for nature leads him to transform Myden's plantation into an agrarian utopia:

Hardyl hizo praderías dilatadas de los campos alindados al río en que pudiesen alimentarse vacadas y ganados menores [...] ahondó fosos que recibiesen el sobrante del agua de los campos, y éstos los dividió con hileras de árboles, haciendo por ello plantíos. (297)

This portrait of agrarian virtue is further heightened by scenes of fraternity and social equality—Hardyl and Eusebio work “mezclados con los mismos labradores” (297). Economic independence is promoted by Hardyl's division of Myden's colony into small parcels of fertile land which he makes available for small farming communities to settle and cultivate. In contrast

15 See chapter I of Book III of Mendieta's Historia Eclesiastica Indiana entitled, "De cómo en la conquista que D. Fernando Cortés hizo de la Nueva España, parece fue enviado de Dios como otro Moisés para librar los naturales de la servidumbre de Egipto".
to Henrique and Susana, Eusebio and Leocadia choose to live permanently on the land. Their disinterested concern for the welfare of their tenants contrasts sharply with the mercantile spirit of the Mydens, who championed economic self-interest at the expense of developing an effective community or of encouraging agricultural innovation. Their indolence stands as a foil to the diligence of Eusebio, who “ni desistió de su empeño hasta que vio su tarea concluida y puestos los nuevos árboles” (899).

By sharing in the manual work of his colony, Eusebio’s disregard for the status and prestige associated with land ownership in Europe makes him a suitable model for landowning classes everywhere. He exemplifies the Lockean principles of work as the essence of humanity when he asserts: “sentía interiormente contento de acostumbrarse al empleo que dio al hombre la naturaleza” (892). Nor is there any evidence in the attitudes of either Hardyl or Eusebio of the anti-commercial outlook of Myden. Their interest is not in accumulation but in a utilitarian concern for the prosperity of their colony. It is for this reason that they encourage industry and diligence among their tenants, rewarding twelve guineas to the laborer who produces the best harvest in an attempt to improve efficiency and agricultural productivity: “así ella [Susana] como Eusebio deseaba mejorarles su estado para hacérselo más llevadero y para que atendiese con mayor empeño al cultivo” (885).

An even more blatant example of Montengón’s efforts to expiate Spain’s colonial abuses is Eusebio’s abolition of colonial slavery (Part IV). Although Myden defends his use of African slave labor: “los negros”, he claims, “eran vendidos tal vez de sus mismos padres a los europeos y comprados por éstos, no con violencia, sino por vía de amigable contrato” (888), Eusebio challenges him and forces him to admit the indignities of a trade which denies men their natural rights. Rejecting the paradigms of essential difference used to justify Europeans’ treatment of African slaves, Eusebio fixes God as the origin of rights and defines liberty as the birth right of all men, insisting that Africans be understood in the same way as Europeans understand themselves: “Todos los hombres eran hechuras de un mismo padre celestial y que como tales debía reconocerse por hermanos” (889). Through the vision he projects of a brave new egalitarian world, Eusebio, “queriendo borrar con esta demostración el agravio

That Eusebio should inherit the colony he settles is significant in terms of the novel’s poetics of reconquest. For in doing so, Montengón successfully distances Eusebio from any questions raised over the morality of Europe’s possession of New World territories. Moreover, the fact that he inherits it from a Quaker further underscores his just possession of the land, as it was the Quakers who, following the example of William Penn, instituted the legitimate purchase of land from the indigenous populations.
cometido en él contra la humanidad” (889), becomes the champion of abolition and rights the wrongs of history by treating African slaves better than any other European before him.

By exposing the injustices of the Atlantic slave trade and by overhauling the organization of Myden’s colony to create a veritable agrarian paradise where obedience is secured by justice and freedom rather than violence, Montengón confronts the charges of Spain’s colonial abuses in Eusebio by holding up a glistening portrait of "enlightened" Spanish colonialism. Beneficent rather than mercenary, the colonialism practiced by Hardyl and Eusebio is the antithesis of the inhumanity, hypocrisy and ambition of Spain’s earlier conquest of America. Significantly this new American conquest is both peaceful and guiltless.

Montengón’s Combined New World Rhetoric of Defense and Reform

Montengón’s successful attempt to rewrite the Spanish conquest of America as a peaceful and benevolent mission is not his only achievement in Eusebio. For combined with his "enlightened" defense of Spain’s New World endeavors are the practical reforms put forward to redress Spain’s political and economic decline in the eighteenth century. Unlike his contemporaries who chose to ignore the urgency of Spain’s flagging empire in favor of countering anti-Spanish rhetoric with recourse to sixteenth-century imperial myth, Montengón updates their jaundiced use of heroic and military discourses while engaging with the socio-political and economic realities of eighteenth-century Spain. His novel, therefore, also serves as a literary metaphor for the colonial reforms put forward by Spain’s Bourbon ministers who, challenging the country’s aggressive, protectionist and monopolistic practices of trade as unprofitable, called for more liberal and physiocratic reforms.17 In doing so, Montengón answers Juan Pablo Forner’s call to “hallar objetos dignos de elogio en la edad presente, como las hallamos en gran número en las pasadas” (Oración apologética 51). In Eusebio, Montengón overthrows mercantilist assumptions which hold overseas colonies to be of benefit to the mother country only insofar as they contribute to her wealth and prosperity by highlighting the failure of all those who go to America in search of wealth to find it. The mercantile spirit of Henrique Myden is similarly thwarted by the enlightened reforms of Hardyl and Eusebio, whose extensive restructuring of Myden’s colony is a

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17 See, for example, the economic reforms suggested by Campillo, Campomanes, Gándara, Jovellanos and Jorge Juan and Antonio de Ulloa. Their progressive economic reforms, however, were quickly overshadowed by Spain’s obsessive need to defend her colonial record against European criticism in the second half of the eighteenth century.
fictional representation of the economic reforms of Enlightenment thinkers who promoted settlement and self-sufficiency, political and civil liberty, as well as popular sovereignty and justice as the most effective means of guaranteeing the social and material progress of a nation.

Of central importance to any discussion of America in the eighteenth century is the question of sovereignty of overseas colonies. Indeed there was no shortage of Enlightenment intellectuals who believed that European colonial powers should surrender control of their overseas territories. In 1783 the Conde de Aranda advised Carlos III that Spain should “deshacere de todas las posesiones que tiene en el continente de las dos Américas” (qtd. in Ferrer Benimeli 43). That said, such calls were motivated by economic rather than humanitarian concerns. It is, of course, tempting to see Eusebio and Leocadia’s decision to return to settle permanently in Pennsylvania at the end of the novel as tantamount to Montengón’s support for American Independence: “dejaron finalmente Eusebio y Leocadia aquella ciudad [Sevilla] que había sido como escollo funesto en que pareció naufragar su felicidad” (990). Yet it is clear from the unmistakably pro-colonial rhetoric of the novel that this was not Montengón’s intention in *Eusebio*. By setting America off against Europe in the way that he does, Montengón reveals, albeit unwittingly, the devastating consequences of overseas settlement on the Old World. Indeed the reader, in answer to Masson de Morvielliers’ question “¿Qué se debe a España?” may well point to Europe’s ruin as the true cost of Spain’s discovery of America. Montengón, however, does not end the novel on such an ominous note. Eusebio and Leocadia’s severance of all links with the Old World may well seal hermetically the novel’s searing indictment of the ancien régime but it also suggests that if Europe looks westward to America she will find the model needed for her own regeneration and renewal. For Montengón the New World would be the rescue of the Old.19

18 Elsewhere in Europe Adam Smith, Jacques Turgot and the Comte de Mirabeau made similar calls for colonial independence based on the inefficiency of the mercantile system. See Merle (1972) for further details of anti-colonialism during the eighteenth century.

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O’Hagan, "Montengón’s Eusebio: Atoning for Spain’s Colonial Abuses"

WORKS CITED


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