

Irish Migration Studies in Latin America

Society for Irish Latin American Studies

Edmundo O'Gorman (1906-1995), historian

By Edmundo Murray



Edmundo O'Gorman (1906-1995)
(*Academia Mexicana de la Historia*)

O'Gorman, Edmundo (1906-1995), historian, was born on 24 November 1906 in the city of Mexico, the second son of the Dublin-trained mining engineer and painter Cecil Crawford O'Gorman (1874-1943), who arrived in Mexico from Ireland in 1895, and his wife and cousin Encarnación O'Gorman, *née* O'Gorman. Cecil O'Gorman was the son of John O'Gorman, educated at Eton in England, and grandson of Charles O'Gorman, who in August 1823 was appointed the first British consul to Mexico. Other children of Cecil and Encarnación O'Gorman were the artist Juan O'Gorman (1905-1982), Margarita O'Gorman and Tomás O'Gorman, a notary public.

Edmundo O'Gorman attended the University of Mexico Law School, where he graduated in 1928, but then decided to research and teach history. In 1948 he obtained his doctorate in philosophy and in 1951 in history. In 1932-1952 he worked at the Mexican public records office, and contributed to the *Boletín del Archivo General de la Nación*. O'Gorman was appointed a member of the Mexican academies of literature in 1969 and of history in 1972.

An agitated historical debate developed in 1985 between Miguel León Portilla, who published 'Encuentro de dos mundos' in *Cuadernos Americanos* 2 (1987, pp. 188-191), and Edmundo O'Gorman, who replied with 'Encuentro de dos mundos o lo superfluo' in the same journal (pp. 192-213). O'Gorman was against the use of concepts such as 'discovery of America', 'encounter of two worlds', and 'natural mixing' and, as a result, he resigned from the academy of history.

For his outstanding research, Edmundo O'Gorman was awarded the Mexican National Literature Award (1964), the Rafael Heliodoro Valle History Award (1983), the Humanities Teaching Award of the Universidad Autónoma (1986), and an *honoris causa* doctorate from that university (1978).

Among Edmundo O'Gorman's works are *Historia de las divisiones territoriales de México* (1937), *Fundamentos de la historia de América* (1951), *La supervivencia política novohispana* (1961), *México: el trauma de su historia* (1977), *La incógnita de la llamada 'Historia de los indios de la Nueva España', atribuida a Fray Toribio Molina* (1982), and *Destierro de Sombras* (1986). However, his most popular book is *El proceso de la invención de América* (1958), in which O'Gorman opposed the

traditional concept of *discovery* to an innovative reading of the primary sources from original perspectives. He argued that in European culture, the American continent was the result of an intellectual creation. For his work with contemporary sources on Columbus and other conquistadors, Edmundo O'Gorman is often singled as one of the pioneers of post-colonial studies in Latin America.

Edmundo O'Gorman married the art historian Ida Rodríguez Prampolini (b. 1925) of Veracruz. He died on 28 September 1995 in Mexico City.

Edmundo Murray

References

- Díaz Palafox, Guillermo. *Edmundo O'Gorman. In memoriam 1906-1995. Polvo enamorado* (TV documentary, 1996).
- Hernández López, Conrado. 'Lo inmediato: Diez años sin Edmundo O'Gorman' in *Imágenes: Boletín informativo del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* (Mexico), available online (http://www.esteticas.unam.mx/boletin_imagenes/inmediato/inm_conrado03.html), accessed on 8 February 2007.
- Matute, Alvaro. 'El historiador Edmundo O'Gorman (1906-1995) -- introducción a su obra y pensamiento histórico' in *Mexican Studies, Estudios Mexicanos*, 13: 1 (winter 1997), pp. 1-20.

Archives

- Edmundo O'Gorman Collection (official documents and other papers relating to the history of 16th-20th century Mexico), Benson Latin American Collection, General Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin (<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/taro/utlac/00047/lac-00047.html>).