Book Reviews

Longue Durée

Rio de Janeiro. By BRYAN MCCANN. Ten Moments That Shaped. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2025. Photographs. Maps. Figures. Bibliography. Bibliographic essay. Index. xviii, 307 pp. Paper, $22.99.

At the heart of this elegantly and accessibly written book is an implicit question: How to tell the story of a city? Bryan McCann, a historian of modern Brazil whose research has focused principally on Rio de Janeiro, has thought this through from multiple angles in his monographs on urban popular culture, music, social activism, and redemocratization. McCann meets the challenge here through his selection of ten thematic essays plus a substantive epilogue. To call the topics of these chapters "vignettes" would not be quite right, as the phenomena on which he focuses are major developments in Rio's nineteenth- through twenty-first-century history, not picayune moments rescued from the archive or local lore. The author constructs a historical narrative through these loosely connected, chronologically organized essays that, remarkably, could equally serve as both a primer for a lay reader or undergraduate student and a reflection on how to conceive of urban history for specialist scholars.

It would be difficult to imagine a city that has inspired more awe, and more fear, and indeed more superlatives in general, than Rio de Janeiro. From the beginning, McCann's retelling of Rio's history derives, in part, from the unifying ideas that its residents share about themselves. McCann begins his story with Rio's postcolonial period, focusing the first essay on the French painter Jean-Baptiste Debret during his visit to Rio in 1826. Debret's fascination with the city's massive enslaved population allows McCann to introduce one of the keynotes of his book: the long shadow that slavery continues to cast on Rio's social and cultural life. He moves swiftly through the nineteenth century and comes to focus heavily on the period from 1950 to the present. Subsequent chapters are centered around such pivotal moments as the 1936 "Fla-Flu" soccer championship between revealingly different rival teams and the lives of such cultural icons as Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis, Chiquinha Gonzaga, Lygia Clark, Clarice Lispector, and Marielle Franco. This book touches but does not linger on Rio's historical center and its wealthier residential neighborhoods, instead judiciously choosing topics that bring the reader to parts of the city that reflect the history and experiences of its nonelite majority. The most compelling sections of the book are those about the history of popular

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music and about late twentieth-century struggles over urban space and housing, areas of the author's most authoritative expertise.

This cultural history is not an attempt at proportional representation, but rather it endeavors to explain patterns and themes, choosing when to dig down to tell a fuller story. McCann creates through lines that make this book more than a series of snapshots, for example in his numerous references to prior essays and his efforts to point out ways in which stories of the past return with new meaning. The author also threads together these "moments" through the nearly 200 years of Rio's history by reiterating his characterization of the protagonists whom he portrays as "strivers," "tricksters," and "newcomers" to the city (p. 1). These are important ways that Cariocas (residents of Rio) have at times seen themselves. In the hands of someone already well versed in the critical analysis of cultural history, these characterizations stand on their own. For a student or lay reader, however, one wonders if the author could have been more explicit (perhaps in the book's engaging and informative introduction) in foregrounding the pitfalls and abuses, as well as the fruitful uses, of cultural archetypes in the study of the cultural and social history of a city. Similarly, it would have been useful here to explore how this assemblage of "moments" as a place to seek a shared Carioca identity might intersect with, or contrast with, other ways of demarcating and defining what Rio de Janeiro was and is: for example, its territorial space.

One of this book's remarkable features is McCann's expository approach, which serves, in effect, as part of the analysis. He addresses an unusually broad range of readers and even without including any footnotes is able to telegraph some notable historiographical insights and acknowledge his sources while never breaking his stride as narrator and guide. Moreover, the structure itself of the book creates opportunities for the reader to reflect on how a constellation of "moments" can form an understanding of a city's past. These essays do not, and do not claim to, tell the full story of the city. They take the reader through the paces of thinking about which phenomena we as urban historians and observers—newcomers, strivers, and tricksters all of us—grant special meaning, and which ones we might usefully subject to scrutiny. McCann's approach is reminiscent of the way that urban scholars across social science and humanities disciplines have adopted the sensory, embodied practice of "walking as method," of moving observantly through urban space to collect empirical material and construct urban theory. The book then ends, appropriately and beautifully, by pausing to partake in *aquele abraço*, in the city's "rough embrace" (p. 276).

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488155

Santa Bárbara de Las Cabezas: La gran hacienda del Caribe colombiano, 1742–1942. By ADOLFO MEISEL ROCA. Barranquilla: Editorial Universidad del Norte, 2023. Photographs. Maps. Figures. Tables. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. viii, 236 pp. Paper, COP 65,000.00.

Sometime in 1936, an anonymous photographer set their camera to capture a scene of worship underneath the shade of a tree, no doubt one baking under the Caribbean sun.

Depicted in the scene are perhaps several dozen men, women, and children of mixed-race ancestry who attended one of the many open-air masses celebrated near the main house of the Santa Bárbara de Las Cabezas *hacienda*, or cattle ranch. As the photo demonstrates, mass was a multigenerational affair, and generations of individuals and families, both free and enslaved, gathered in these moments to maintain community, celebrate the host, and pause. The labor of the hacienda was intensive and, in the tropical climate of the Caribbean, unforgiving.

For over two centuries, the Trespalacios family/owners of the Santa Bárbara de Las Cabezas hacienda oversaw scenes like those depicted in the 1936 photograph, which underscores a central axis on which Adolfo Meisel Roca's extensively researched and detailed monograph pivots. Family, labor, and the Caribbean economy of cattle ranching, particularly that which was practiced at Santa Bárbara de Las Cabezas, was not just the backbone of the Caribbean Colombian economy but one that brought Colombia further into the global spotlight in the early twentieth century. By the time that the photographer's shutter clicked, thousands of head of cattle had been raised and passed through the hacienda, which generated enormous sums of capital and prestige for the Trespalacios family. Unsurprisingly, the anonymous worshippers underneath the tree did not experience the same fate. And while the cattle may be physically absent from the photograph, their presence certainly looms.

Historian and economist Adolfo Meisel Roca tasks himself with reconstructing the history of the Santa Bárbara de Las Cabezas hacienda, arguing that such a history should occupy a central position within the historiography of Caribbean Colombia. After reading this book, I must agree. Meisel Roca underscores that, located in the Colombian department of Cesar, Las Cabezas was, spatially speaking, the largest hacienda in the region, with the greatest number of cattle. And yet, despite this massive economic presence, Meisel Roca observes that scholars have merely mentioned the hacienda in passing, choosing to focus instead on other Caribbean family enterprises that, according to the author, were much more politically and economically connected to the struggles of Colombia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For Meisel Roca, this is a grave mistake, as Las Cabezas's evolution deeply mirrored the challenges of the colonial world of the New Kingdom of Granada, Colombia's wars of independence, and even land expropriation campaigns of the mid- to late twentieth century.

The author guides his audience through a microhistory of the hacienda, supported by archival material from national, imperial, local, and personal archives. Meisel Roca's extensive use of photographs, tables, interviews, and maps further complements his source base, making this study a handy companion for social and economic historians and students. Furthermore, family trees abound between the pages of *Santa Bárbara de Las Cabezas*, which makes it possible for Meisel Roca's audience to trace the branches of a family that had quite literally grown along with the hacienda.

The author begins by examining the environmental conditions of Las Cabezas's physical location, inviting his audience to reflect on the Annales school approach to better comprehend why Las Cabezas experienced the successes that it did. Chapter 2 focuses on the colonial period, with specific attention paid to the fundamental relationship between

the evolution of the city of Mompox and that of Las Cabezas during the late eighteenth century. As the author successfully argues, the history of Las Cabezas cannot be understood without that of Mompox. Commercial activity as well as slavery facilitated both Mompox's economic expansion during the colonial period and the proliferation of elite families like the Trespalacios family, the hacienda's proprietors for over 200 years. Meisel Roca's third chapter details just how significant cattle ranching had become as a coastal operation, despite the wars of independence. Chapter 4 turns readers' attention to the meteoric rise of the hacienda, followed by a slow eclipse that the author attributes to family infighting, lack of coordinated vision, infrastructure challenges with rail lines and motorways, and a shifting preference of younger Trespalacios family members for moving to thriving coastal cities like Barranquilla and Cartagena. Chapter 5 traces the final dissolution of the hacienda, which mirrored demographic shifts and agrarian reform under the presidency of Carlos Alberto Lleras Restrepo.

This study reflects Meisel Roca's decades-long fascination with Colombia's Caribbean history. Future studies concerning cattle ranching would certainly benefit from the abundant data presented in the book's pages. Cultural historians, too, can find a wealth of material with which to launch their studies, as Meisel Roca, for instance, attributes Las Cabezas as the cradle of *vallenato*, one of Colombia's most significant musical genres.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488179

Toward a Small Data Archaeology: Otomí, Aztec Imperial, and Spanish Colonial Xaltocan, Mexico. By LISA OVERHOLTZER. Denver: University Press of Colorado, 2025. Photographs. Illustration. Maps. Figures. Tables. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. xvii, 281 pp. Cloth, $93.00.

Lisa Overholtzer's *Toward a Small Data Archaeology: Otomí, Aztec Imperial, and Spanish Colonial Xaltocan, Mexico* offers an archaeological approach to everyday life in Postclassic and early colonial Xaltocan rooted in data feminism. Following Donna Haraway and other scholars, Overholtzer argues that the current infatuation with big data and AI in archaeology is deafeningly male, white, and technoheroic, representing the embodiment of hegemonic, heteronormative, and ultimately masculinist and colonialist fantasies. In response, Overholtzer relies on Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren Klein's approach called data feminism. According to these authors, this method employs data science to combat big data's tendencies, and its principles include examining and challenging power, elevating embodiment and emotion, rethinking hierarchies and binaries, embracing pluralism, contemplating context, and rendering labor visible. Overholtzer argues that data feminism also redirects the analysis from modern Western ontological frameworks toward Indigenous ones.

Overholtzer analyzed the burials and middens of two mounds through osteological identification of age, sex, and musculoskeletal markers; Bayesian statistical modeling of radiocarbon dates; ancient DNA analysis; and instrumental neutron activation analysis.

The study focuses on the changes in household practices during two major political transitions: Aztec imperialism and Spanish colonialism. Overholtzer argues that imperial and colonial elites silenced these people's histories. Consequently, following the Indigenous feminist perspective and the employment of fiction in feminist archaeology, Overholtzer created an alternative narrative that sees and acknowledges the acts of survivance of this four-generation family. To do this, she gave names to the nine human remains that she found.

Regarding consumption patterns, Overholtzer found that Xaltocamecas imported Mexico Tenochtitlan pottery decades before the foundation of the Triple Alliance, even before the conquest of Xaltocan by Azcapotzalco. Moreover, she found variability in market choices, as the household that she analyzed did not consume ceramics from the south of the valley, whereas 50 percent of the Xaltocamecas did. The variability in choices increased in the early colonial period, as ceramic artisans adopted, adapted, experimented with, and rejected European ceramic technology and iconography. However, Overholtzer found that even at the beginning of the viceregal era, almost all the highly polished Redwares used to serve beverages at feasts were locally produced.

Overholtzer's work fits into multiple contemporary debates, within both archaeology and other disciplines. Firstly, as Overholtzer herself points out, some of her interpretations were only possible thanks to the samples of previous regional projects, and her findings will be used to compile a big data approach. She argues that the problem is not the technology itself but how it is used. However, it seems that the big data approach is nothing but a consequence of all the small data already collected by archaeologists. In this way, similar to what Norbert Elias pointed out regarding the dispute between Parsonians and neo-Marxists in sociology, this division between masculine big data and feminine small data appears to be political rather than scientific, a projection into archaeology of a contemporary political dispute. Secondly, it would be interesting to contrast Overholtzer's narrative with the work already done by Mexican and US archaeologists. Traditional archaeological work in Mexico relies on small data, and scholars such as David Carballo, Linda Manzanilla, Guillermo Acosta, and Michael Smith, among others, have focused on the household in Mesoamerica. Moreover, there is a long-standing tradition of historical works regarding everyday life in ancient Mexico, from Jacques Soustelle to Mari Carmen Serra Puche and Pablo Escalante Gonzalbo.

Finally, regarding the book's epistemological approach, it would be interesting to discuss the limitations of a methodology that rejects masculinity. As is well known, the Mesoamerican worldview was dualistic, with masculine and feminine as complements. In fact, the beginning of time in Mesoamerican myths occurred when the masculine divine substances merged with the feminine ones in the cosmic trees. Furthermore, the primordial couple headed the pantheon of central Mexican peoples, represented in the Codex Borgia as Ometecuhtli and Omecihuatl, and in the Codex Fejérváry-Mayer as Tonacacihuatl and Tonacatecuhtli. The conception of complementarity between masculine and feminine persists to this day among the peoples of central Mexico. Believers offer prayers to "our father, our mother," and the two main religious events in the Valley of Mexico are dedicated to a male and a female deity: the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ in Iztapalapa, and the Virgin of Guadalupe cult of December 12. Although

Overholtzer states that data feminism redirects the analysis from modern Western ontological frameworks toward Indigenous ones, the Mesoamerican worldview is absent from her work. One might ask to what extent analyzing ancient Mexico from a Western and contemporary epistemology that rejects the masculine component constitutes an act of colonialism. This will surely be a topic that Overholtzer will have to discuss with her audience.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488051

The Nine Lives of Christopher Columbus. By MATTHEW RESTALL. New York: W. W. Norton, 2025. Photographs. Map. Figures. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xxiii, 337 pp. Cloth, $35.00.

In a year (2025) overloaded with presidential orders, pardons, and unrelenting complaints and accusations leveled against a host of perceived political enemies, it came as no surprise that the current occupant of the White House would use his bully pulpit to try to rehabilitate Christopher Columbus's badly tarnished contemporary reputation. In recent times commemorative statues had been removed, and President Joseph R. Biden had declared that Indigenous Peoples' Day would be observed on the second Monday of October. Referring to Columbus as "the original American hero, a giant of Western civilization, and one of the most gallant and visionary men to ever walk the face of the earth," President Donald Trump's October 9 proclamation promised to "reclaim his extraordinary legacy of faith, courage, perseverance, and virtue from the left-wing arsonists who have sought to destroy his name and dishonor his memory."

The speechwriters in the White House (or probably AI) doubtless did not have Matthew Restall's new book in mind when they produced that fulsome rhetoric. Should they read Restall's highly engaging inquiry into the twists and turns that consideration of Columbus's life and legacy has taken over the last several hundred years, they likely would find perspectives that are difficult to reduce to the president's preferred discourse of good versus evil. Yet the proclamation is a reminder of the tenacity—indeed resilience—of Columbus, for better or worse, as a pivotal figure in our collective history and memory. Devoting minimal space to refuting the common but tenacious myths that surround the real man, Restall instead offers a nuanced history that explores the enduring resonance—and uses—of his life, ambitions, and accomplishments.

Restall is hardly the first author to debunk the notions that Columbus was a visionary ahead of his time or that his past is cloaked in mystery. His objective, however, is more complex: to "explain and explode four threads of mythistory that run through Columbiana" (p. xxi)—which, notably, is both the same as and considerably larger than Columbus's actual life and deeds. The nine "lives" that Restall identifies may have been rooted in biography but have morphed over time, becoming more expansive in form and meaning in unpredictable ways. Consider, for example, the discovery and "proof" of Columbus's ostensible Gallego origins, for which there never was a shred of evidence,

in what Restall refers to as "the classic sequence of a smoking-gun solution to an invented mystery" (p. 164).

The book's nine "lives" encompass not only Columbus's actual origins, objectives, and deeds but also their lengthy and sometimes convoluted sociocultural and political impact and implications up to the present day. The first offers a sketch of the career that took Columbus from Genoa to Lisbon, where he was with his brother Bartolomeo and made an advantageous marriage. He pitched the idea of sailing west across the Atlantic to both the Portuguese and Spanish sovereigns.

The second life encompasses Columbus's famous voyages and their consequences, in which "his rapid rise presaged a series of falls" (p. 32). As most scholars recognize, the voyages were but "a small chapter in the sweeping history of European expansion" (p. 37). A great deal of accumulated maritime knowledge and experience, together with advances in shipbuilding and understanding the wind and current system of the Atlantic Ocean, created the conditions in which sailing west from Europe became not only feasible but arguably inevitable.

The third life concerns Columbus's mortal remains, the mobility of which made for a complicated afterlife. In the nineteenth century the Columbus of life four became a candidate for canonization by virtue of his ostensible faith and piety. In his fifth life as "the lover," despite efforts to cast him as everything from a rapist to the object of Queen Isabel's secret affections, the historic evidence suggests that he was far more interested in social status than sex or romance.

Lives six through nine follow the convoluted and contradictory (but often quite fascinating) claims, some undergirded by pure invention, that have been made regarding Columbus's origins and rightful place in history. Columbus's incarnation as a "US nationalist icon" (p. 191) in the nineteenth century, long after his death, is but one claim on Columbus's legacy among many. Discussion of the contention and controversy that have surrounded that legacy mainly appears in the ninth life. The negative associations that surround Columbus have complicated Italian Americans' desire to commemorate his legacy and put them at odds with those who see him as embodying the racism and imperialism that are embedded in the country's origins and history.

Restall's book is richly detailed and rooted in an extensive historiography. He takes an original approach to a topic that many would assume has been exhausted long since. The result is a historical inquiry that both entertains and edifies, recommended for a broad audience.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488163

Global Politics of Welsh Patagonia: Settler Colonialism from the Margins. By LUCY TAYLOR. Race, Ethnicity, Wales and the World. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2025. Map. Notes. Bibliography. Index. viii, 234 pp. Paper, $31.00.

Global Politics of Welsh Patagonia cannot be accused of lacking ambition. Lucy Taylor's stated aim is to look at Y Wladfa as a case study in order "to reveal just how complicated

settler colonial relationships can be" (p. 1). The crux of the complexity lies in the ambiguous position of Welsh Patagonians as "simultaneously colonized and colonizing" (p. 1): While motivated by a desire to escape what they perceived as colonization at home, they pursued autonomy by establishing themselves on Indigenous territory allocated to them by the Argentine government in its drive to encourage white, European immigration. Drawing on postcolonial, Indigenous, and settler colonial studies, Taylor's analytical framework comprises three conceptual tools that, she argues, "are equally, though differently, applicable to both the Indigenous and Welsh communities" (p. 1). While acknowledging the asymmetries between both societies, the author utilizes "possession, racialization/barbarization and assimilation" to examine Welsh positionality both in Patagonia and in Wales (p. 1)—and therein lies one of the original contributions of the volume. Staking her claim in the enduring debate about whether Wales's subaltern position is best explained in terms of colonial relations or mere intranational inequalities within the British state, Taylor looks into colonization as "a long-standing and perhaps constitutive condition of Welshness" (p. 21), integrating dynamics relevant to both the incorporation of Wales into the English legal system from 1536 and domination in Anglophone North America. It is for Welsh history scholars to decide how that works, and I will certainly be looking forward to their reactions.

Taylor's approach is further distinguished by an effort to ensure that perspectives from Latin America are represented. That is accomplished on various levels, from the attempt to decenter the dominance of Welsh perspectives by starting her introduction with a Mapuche testimonial to the adoption of analytical frameworks rooted in the global South. In a clear prose accessible to nonacademic readers, the volume integrates the coloniality of power approach championed by Walter Mignolo and Aníbal Quijano to its broader settler colonial framework. Moreover, not only does the "racialization/barbarization" conceptual tool incorporate a notion that has structured Argentina's history and intellectual debate for almost two centuries, but Taylor then utilizes that notion to explain how the Welsh themselves have been "barbarized" in the UK. By cross-applying categories typically reserved for subaltern peoples to European subjects, the volume also interrogates the assumption of a uniformly privileged Europe, highlighting the structural parallels between the global subaltern and Europe's own oppressed minorities.

Taylor invokes the metaphor of the "glass corridor" to characterize how the relationship between Wales and Welsh Patagonia is imagined as an exceptionalist space shielded from the complexities of global entanglement. Showing how cultural productions perpetuate that image to this day, she explores the sense of moral righteousness accorded to Wales by the celebrated friendship between the settlers and Indigenous Patagonians during the first decade of the settlement. While the iconic status of the Patagonia experience in the Welsh national imagination—due to the implausible survival of the Welsh language and a suite of distinctive cultural markers—has been explored before, Taylor is one of the hitherto rather few British academics who have noted a crucial aspect: how the celebratory rhetoric legitimizes settler colonial structures in Patagonia while furthering the narrative erasure of contemporary Indigenous presence undertaken by the Argentine state. Although those critiques are sometimes construed in Wales as an

attempt to "cancel" Welsh Patagonia (as a pointed swipe at Welsh nationalism) or an affront to the unblemished memory of the heroic pioneers, anyone familiar with the Argentinean context will appreciate that this is not merely an exercise in Welsh historiography but rather a debate inextricably linked to the contested realities of contemporary Argentina.

Using a 160-year breadth of diverse sources, the volume successfully situates the Welsh Patagonian experience within both its Argentinean context and the broader currents of contemporary geopolitics. Explaining how Y Wladfa has been deployed in Argentina is helpful and important for English-language audiences, inviting considerations of how the monumentalization of the so-called *gesta galesa* (Welsh feat) marginalizes the persistent presence of Indigenous peoples beyond their key supporting role in teaching the settlers to survive on the hostile steppe. Considering Y Wladfa within its contemporary global dynamics dismantles the aura of exceptionalism that has prevented more productive analyses. Time will tell how this analysis of Welsh Patagonia advances theoretical frameworks and dialogues with other settler colonial scenarios.

While Taylor's theoretical commitments are clear, her volume culminates in a call to action. What can Wales do by way of historical redress for its role as an instrument—however unwitting and sympathetic—of the Argentine state's campaign of Indigenous dispossession? Navigating allyship without falling into paternalism or foreign intervention is a fraught endeavor, and some of the volume's suggestions are riskier than others. However, significant effort is still needed in Wales to achieve what the author identifies as the first step: recognizing that role. By helping readers understand the ambivalent complexity and local implications of the case study under analysis, Taylor's volume (made widely accessible via an open-access pdf) certainly represents a pivotal contribution toward achieving that objective.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488235

Notebooks on the History of Latin America, 1750–2008. By JOHN WOMACK JR. Mexico City: Instituto Tecnológico Autónoma de México, 2024. Maps. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. 647 pp. Paper, $38.00.

This is a big, interesting book: instructive, mildly infuriating, and very idiosyncratic. I initially supposed that "notebooks" might consist of papers, research notes, perhaps personal accounts compiled during decades of research on Latin America. And, given John Womack's advocacy of historical materialism, I imagined parallels with Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* (not that Harvard quite corresponds to the grim Turi penitentiary). However, Womack's "notebooks" are 52 course lectures, delivered at Harvard in 1982–2008, covering 258 years of Latin American history. They have been neither updated nor revised: "I leave it to readers to decide how these notes look now," the author disarmingly comments (p. 11). And there's the rub: The history may be sound, but the

text is ill written, repetitive, and chock-full of semantic errors (errors of fact are rare: The problems are presentational, but pervasive and perplexing).

Womack's classic *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (1970) proved that he writes clearly, engagingly, with literary panache. While lectures might reasonably be more chatty than academic monographs, it's a mystery why Womack's prose is uncharacteristically clunking. Or, indeed, why no one systematically revised the text for publication: a big task, but feasible and worthwhile. Revision could also have cut the repetitive preambles to every lecture/chapter; it could have beefed up the bibliography (which is short and sketchy) and provided supportive footnotes (there are just three in the whole book, two of which refer to the works of Womack). Thus, apart from a few passing references to course readings (some names misspelled), there's no way of knowing where Womack gets his information, and there's scant engagement with alternative historical interpretations. This, I repeat, is mildly infuriating.

Style aside, the substance is impressive. Compared to many general histories, the book is genuinely synoptic, covering a huge swath of time and space; it avoids the one-damn-thing-after-another curse of textbook narratives (though the final passages, dealing with contemporary Latin America, veer in this direction); and it skirts big events and individuals—wars and caudillos—concentrating on broad socioeconomic analysis. The great men of *historia patria*—José de San Martín, Diego Portales, Juan Manuel de Rosas, Antonio López de Santa Anna, Gabriel García Moreno, Plutarco Elías Calles, and Lázaro Cárdenas—figure fleetingly, if at all. Womack pays close attention to geography (though the four maps are useless) and, as we would expect, sticks to a broadly Marxist metanarrative that, without straitjacketing the historical account, provides a coherent central thread: the evolution of capitalism (equally, the long, lingering decline of "feudalism"), changing modes of production and class relations, and the political (superstructural) shifts that followed. When it comes to grand synthetic history, there are several ways to skin a cat. But this is an effective approach, particularly when it links grand theory to production on the ground and the conflictual roles of capital and labor through the twentieth century. Only at the end, as Womack grapples with recent trends, does the grand narrative falter and the dreaded one-damn-thing-after-another syndrome make a belated appearance. The final chapter is not a conclusion but an idiosyncratic foray into Latin America's contemporary collective psychology: so-called "Continual Traumatic Stress Disorder" (p. 627).

Inevitably, queries arise. Regarding sins of commission, Womack stresses the pervasive durability of "feudalism" (i.e., "feudal lords" exploiting "serfs" via extraeconomic "coercion"). The concept is valid, but the application is too sweeping. Estate workers were recruited and retained by diverse means, including custom and material incentives, not just coercion. The debts of debt peons served as incentives as well as bonds. Furthermore, Womack sees feudalism and serfdom surviving tenaciously into the twentieth century: As late as the 1940s, in Brazil and elsewhere, "the largest fraction of the population remained at work in feudalism" (p. 377). Similarly, his "proprietary mode" (roughly, "petty-commodity production" [p. 24]) is overly generalized, especially in his analysis of contemporary economies (pp. 64, 300, 327, 364, 424, 482, 486, 545). (Some Marxists

would, quite reasonably, consider such petty producers—artisans, *minifundistas*, street traders—to be disguised proletarians.) And Womack's "state capitalism" is not the old Trotskyist notion of a perverted (e.g., Stalinist) command economy but the much more familiar and pervasive phenomenon of state "capture" by corporate business interests (pp. 371, 417, 472, 443, 519).

Womack places Latin America in a global context, providing substantial analysis of the role of Europe and the US—some perceptive and relevant (e.g., the architecture of contemporary global capitalism), some overlong and occasionally unconvincing. Britain's role is exaggerated: British merchants didn't rule the roost in the nineteenth century, nor was Britain responsible for the War of the Triple Alliance, the War of the Pacific, or the Mexican Revolution (pp. 145–46, 173–74, 290, 303). Albion was perfidious, but it wasn't that powerful. (Incidentally, the British government was not "leaning toward a conditional surrender to Germany" in late 1941 [p. 355].) More broadly, Womack reprises old Leninist accounts of the so-called new imperialism (pp. 280–81), which implausibly exaggerate the link between capitalist expansion at home and armed colonial expansion abroad (e.g., in Africa). The latter offered slim pickings compared to the developed economies of Europe, the "White Dominions," and the Americas.

Though Womack's approach is materialist—and productionist—he doesn't neglect "culture." He posits—arguably, intuits—broad collective psychologies across time and space. Colonial "serfs" lived "bleak" lives, with "very little sex or brawling," just occasional "explosive," alcohol-fueled fiestas, "with dances and songs, very solemn, wistful, sad"; their chief afflictions were "psychosomatic maladies," manifested in "deep fears, jealousies, resentment, [and] paranoia" (p. 84). Colonial elites, too, had their collective hang-ups (pp. 109–10, 258–60). Modern shantytowns are places of aimless, shifting anomie, incapable of collective action (pp. 385, 431, 493): an old, overly sweeping argument, which overlooks urban regularization and improvement, often the work of local activism (compare pp. 515, 553). The Catholic Church gets detailed perceptive treatment, especially regarding recent decades, when it faced threatening rivals and schisms. However, the analysis comes laden with dense lists of Catholic activists and their curricula vitae: an unusual—and tedious—capitulation to the great man school of history (pp. 320–22, 456, 504–7). Rock music—chiefly Argentinean—also receives serious attention, but football gets only token treatment. World Cups matter, it seems, but clubs and their *hinchas*—the bedrock of the sport—are overlooked (pp. 533, 611).

To Womack's credit, very little gets left out; his sins of omission are few and far between. He echoes recent revisionist interpretations of independence: These were "civil wars," they did not pit patriots against imperialists, and nationalism played no part in this story. Locked into their parochial localities, Latin Americans had no sense of the patria (pp. 112, 120, 125, 128). Womack discounts counterexamples: the writings of creole intellectuals like Francisco Javier Clavijero or the anticolonial (protopatriotic?) sentiments evident in popular protests, from Tupac Amaru to Miguel Hidalgo to the *porteño* militia's defeat of the British in Buenos Aires. And so it continues: The new republics of the 1820s "were not yet nations" (p. 144); 40 years later, Cuban rebels were patriots (p. 271), but they were exceptional. As late as the 1920s, Cuba is still an outlier:

"Elsewhere [in Latin America], most people had little sense of nationality" (p. 341). I find this negation—and neglect—of nationalism unconvincing.

Womack similarly downplays what is sometimes called popular "agency." After independence, "feudal" lords no longer faced deferential "serfs." Feisty popular forces joined both armed rebellions, which Womack discusses (part 1, chapter 14), as well as pioneer political movements, which he ignores. Elections—recently much studied—don't figure in his story until circa 1870, when they are a "new development," involving "big shots and decent folks," while "the lowly stood by merely as bystanders" (pp. 202–3). In summarizing liberal and conservative alignments, Womack focuses squarely on elite interests, discounting the popular contingents who, deploying ballots as well as bullets, played a significant role. Later, in his synopsis of twentieth-century sociopolitical conflict, Womack perceptively analyzes labor movements but has little to say about student protest.

By way of conclusion, consider the old nautical adage: "Don't spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar." That is, having built your fine timber boat, don't stint on the calking or it might go to the bottom. This hefty book has the makings of a major, original, and valuable survey, and, as such, it's well worth reading (albeit the reading can be hard going). Though it springs lots of leaks, it remains seaworthy. Given a few barrels of tar, well applied, it could have become a formidable ship of the line. It's both an impressive achievement and an opportunity missed.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488035

Fifteenth–Seventeenth Centuries

Knowing an Empire: Early Modern Chinese and Spanish Worlds in Dialogue. Edited by MACKENZIE COOLEY and HUIYI WU. ASIANetwork Books. Ann Arbor, MI: Lever Press, 2025. Maps. Figures. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xviii, 598 pp. Paper, $49.99.

The focus of this ambitious edited volume is a technique of governance used in the early modern Chinese and Spanish Empires alike: the demand from the capital for local officials to compose geographic descriptions of the provinces. In Ming and Qing Dynasty China, these descriptions were known as the *difangzhi* 地方志, or "local gazetteers"; their analogs in the Spanish Empire were the *relaciones geográficas*. The comparison of these two genres proves a fruitful endeavor.

Mackenzie Cooley and Wu Huiyi, the editors, have sorted eighteen chapters into six parts and a coda, which, together with an introduction, make up what they call "a juxtapositional comparative study" (p. 1). That is, each of the six parts includes at least one chapter on China and another on the Spanish Empire. Only three chapters toward the end of the volume make extensive direct comparisons or highlight points of contact between the two empires. For the most part, then, the contributors stick to their own areas of specialization.

The first part, entitled "Knowing the State," historicizes the difangzhi and the relaciones, discusses their relevant precedents, and details the processes of their creation. A common interest in the original impetus for the collection of the descriptions—be it a central questionnaire (*cuestionario*) or a set of principles for compilation (*fanli* 凡例)—links the chapters in this part. A relatively brief second part entitled "Structures of Knowing" comprises two chapters that use digital, statistical, and cartographic methods to probe the difangzhi and the relaciones for new patterns and insights.

The third part, "Knowing Space," includes one chapter each on the maps of the difangzhi and the relaciones. Whereas the Ming Dynasty maps analyzed by Mario Cams "have their origins in top-down efforts of the authorities to order the imperial space" (p. 202), at least some of the maps of the relaciones from New Spain "respond[ed] instead to local imperatives" (p. 223), Barbara Mundy shows. Her chapter concludes with three paragraphs on the publication history of the relaciones, an important topic that remains otherwise unexplored in the volume.

The fourth part is the book's most substantial. Entitled "Knowing Nature," its four chapters are united by their use of geographic descriptions to track environmental changes. Exchange, extraction, taxation, and violence are among the various causes for the hydrological shifts, species extinctions, alterations in crop regimes, and demographic changes detailed in this part. As a rule, the changes reported in the relaciones are sudden, while those that appear in the difangzhi are gradual. In their brief introduction to the part, the editors attribute this difference to the "colonial conquest" of the Americas, which they contrast with the emergence of China, a "non-colonial" empire (p. 233). Elsewhere in the volume the editors downplay this "habitual dichotomy" (p. 233).

Part 5, "Knowing People," is as much about the limits of what we can glean from geographic descriptions as it is about what they disclose. Marcella Hayes convincingly argues that an elaborate reenactment of the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid* by Lima's *mulatos* in 1631 was a statement of the group's pride in what it had done to establish a new Rome in Peru. Her sources are colonial chronicles rather than relaciones, so the point here is that the relaciones, which generally give short shrift to Afro-descendants, can supply only an incomplete picture of the social reality of the Spanish Empire. In his chapter, Stuart M. McManus makes only slightly more use of the relaciones than Hayes does, but he importantly brings together the literatures on Atlantic and East Asian slavery, with a particular focus on Macao, where the two regimes overlapped.

"Connections and Transfers," the book's sixth part, picks up where McManus leaves off. In their chapters on the East Asian contact zones of Guangdong, Fujian, and the Philippines, Wu Huiyi and Yan Niping pay particular attention to the appearance of Europeans in the difangzhi and Sangleys (Chinese-descended Filipino merchants) in the relaciones. The final chapter, which stands alone in a coda entitled "Empires of Informal Knowing," asks why the Portuguese Empire never developed a tradition comparable to the relaciones or difangzhi and how it governed its overseas territories without one.

Throughout the volume, there is a satisfying balance of chapters that look at the sources themselves and chapters that aim to look through them, to the natural, political, and economic realities of the Chinese and Spanish Empires. Still, the book is hampered

by its ambivalence about whether the relaciones are a corpus—that is, a fixed set of documents written between 1578 and 1590, the vast majority in New Spain—or a more flexible genre that encompasses descriptions written in response to any of more than two dozen questionnaires that circulated in the Spanish Empire between 1530 and 1812. María M. Portuondo alludes to this debate in the book's very first chapter (p. 43). Several other contributors mention the fact that the collected difangzhi dwarf the relaciones in both number and scale, prompting the editors themselves to make the colorful admission that their volume's central task "is a bit like comparing an industrial apple orchard and an orange grove" (p. 4). Why not, then, relax the temporal restriction on what constitutes a relación geográfica? Cooley alone among the contributors cites those of the eighteenth century—and even then only in a single paragraph. A more expansive temporal scope would have allowed the editors to "show a diachronic evolution of imperial knowledge" in the case of the relaciones (p. 21), a goal that they achieve admirably when it comes to the difangzhi.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488139

The Audiencia of Santo Domingo in the Seventeenth Century: Justice and Royal Authority in the Spanish Caribbean. By MARC EAGLE. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2025. Maps. Table. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xviii, 287 pp. Cloth, $70.00.

Marc Eagle's incredibly detailed new work, *The Audiencia of Santo Domingo in the Seventeenth Century*, adds to a growing scholarship focused on the oft forgotten seventeenth-century Spanish Caribbean (for example, Juan José Ponce Vázquez's 2020 *Islanders and Empire: Smuggling and Political Defiance in Hispaniola, 1580–1690*). Here Eagle deftly disproves the long-accepted narrative of Hispaniola's "decline" and "stagnation," instead painting a portrait of a vibrant society at the heart of the Spanish colonial enterprise. He focuses in particular on the Audiencia of Santo Domingo: its practices, policies, leaders, economy, and scandals. Eagle argues that by diving deep into the inner workings of this institution, one can better understand the Hapsburg Spanish Empire as a whole. Central to Eagle's thesis, one of the more impactful contributions of the text, is his evaluation of how the audiencia was able (or unable) to produce and enforce laws, what authority different levels of governance truly commanded, and how local conditions often dictated interpretation of royal orders. The tribunal served both as a vessel of crown policy and as the conduit for the voices of Caribbean residents to Spain. However, the audiencia not only connected Santo Domingo and the larger Caribbean to the metropole but connected the various parties to one another within the region. Through the correspondence and documentation produced by the audiencia one is able to see how one group's interests (for example, the church) may or may not have matched with those of the crown or even local militias or merchants. All these debates and divisions appear in audiencia archives.

Eagle begins his work with the founding of the tribunal in 1511 and follows it through various evolutions (for example, the move to military leadership after Francis

Drake's invasion of 1586) to the culmination of the seventeenth century. While Eagle focuses most on the audiencia's functions, from the boring or mundane (like the common chore of conducting *residencias*) to the highly controversial (like threatening to execute Puerto Rico's treasurers for missing revenue or sentencing a colonist to burn for sodomy), his analysis also reveals much about the general history of Hispaniola under the first 200 years of Spanish domination. The tribunal was involved in every aspect of life on the island, and as such one finds details of pirate attacks, foreign invasions, devastating hurricanes, race relations, power dynamics, and ethnic demography within its records. Eagle also shows how the themes overlap. For example, the demand for African slaves often led the audiencia to approve "irregular entries" of slaves (p. 165). And while the audiencia was involved in all levels of governance, their correspondence and treatises necessarily privileged an elite perspective, even downplaying the work of lower-level officials in the tribunal. Because the tribunal did not possess a formal "protector of Indians," one also finds sparse discussion of the concerns of Indigenous peoples in the region within these sources.

While the majority of the book does focus on the lives and perspectives of the elite colonists of Hispaniola, it still succeeds in providing a different view of Hispaniola than previous histories. In particular, the book underscores the strategic importance of Hispaniola and the Audiencia of Santo Domingo throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. So important was the tribunal and the island on which it resided that multiple foreign invasions only strengthened the crown's commitment to Hispaniola. Over the seventeenth century the Caribbean became more multinational, and Hispaniola (with its audiencia at the center) played a key role in maintaining connections and communication between the metropole and the Americas. Despite calls to move the audiencia to Havana or Caracas (more attractive destinations for potential Spanish colonists), royal officials staunchly supported the maintenance of the tribunal in Santo Domingo as they feared that a move would only leave Hispaniola weaker and open to conquest by another European power. Somewhat surprisingly, the tribunal was also quite economical, with nearly all its maintenance paid for by the *situado* coming from Mexico and Colombia. In the end, the Audiencia of Santo Domingo was one of the most enduring and stable institutions of the Spanish Caribbean.

Eagle's book is undoubtedly the most detailed and substantial work on the seventeenth-century Audiencia of Santo Domingo. Through meticulous research Eagle succeeded in highlighting a previously underappreciated piece of Spanish administration that played a critical role for both the crown and Caribbean residents. By examining the inner workings of the Audiencia of Santo Domingo, Eagle opens a window to "mature Habsburg administration" and how it functioned on a daily basis in the Spanish Caribbean (p. 188). Yet at times the book does devolve a bit into minutiae and very detailed anecdotes that may lose some readers, especially those who are not overly familiar with the larger history of Hispaniola. The book is not meant for popular audiences but is a must-read for any scholar on the colonial Caribbean.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488267

Sins of Excess: The Spatial Politics of Idolatry and Magic in Colonial Mexico. By ANDERSON HAGLER. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2025. Figures. Bibliography. Index. xi, 214 pp. Cloth, $55.00.

Throughout the colonial period, secular and clerical elites frequently lamented the moral "excesses" of Indigenous and Afro-descended subjects of New Spain. Anderson Hagler's *Sins of Excess* adds to our understanding of the colonial religious landscape by analyzing the deployment of the term "excess" (*exceder* and *excesos*) by elites onto perceived sinful behaviors in colonial society. Yet this study goes beyond a conceptual exegesis of the notion of excess by adding a layer of spatial analysis to illuminate that the deployment of this concept could be linked to particular spaces occupied by nonelites. In taking a diachronic approach, Hagler illustrates that despite the preoccupation of elites with excess, campaigns of catechization and extirpation regularly failed to root out the "excessive" practices in question.

Hagler develops his arguments across five chapters organized along thematic lines. After the introduction, chapter 2 focuses primarily on theological construction by Catholic clergy of Indigenous and, to a lesser extent, African practices. Hagler examines clerical preoccupations with ritual specialists such as *nahualli* and pre-Columbian sites of ritual significance. The third chapter turns its focus from Christian constructions to more deeply probe the Indigenous understanding of nahualli and their persistence across time despite efforts to extirpate such practices. Importantly, Hagler emphasizes that local elites, secular and religious, remained convinced of the efficacy of such practitioners and their rituals, even as elites in Mexico City became increasingly skeptical of their veracity. Chapter 4 turns more heavily into the spatial analysis of these beliefs. Hagler argues that the linkage of heterodox practices with rural landscapes tended to lead to such regions' perception as "excessive" and rendered their inhabitants inherently suspect. Chapter 5 narrows its focus to the sins of sodomy and bestiality. His spatial analysis highlights that, given typical residence patterns, nonelites, especially young adults, had few private spaces, and as a result they engaged in sexual activity in places where discovery by others could occur more frequently. The book concludes with a coda that emphasizes the deeply contextual and spatial nature of elites' preoccupation with "excess." Moreover, Hagler reminds us that Indigenous and Afro-descended peoples' synthesis of Christian tradition with non-Christian practices fueled the persistent ascription of excess to popular practices and the spaces in which those rituals occurred.

The deep cultural analysis of the Spanish notion of excess offers a timely addition to the literature on religious practice, evangelization, and local religion in the colonial period. Hagler's work adds to that of scholars such as Laura Lewis, Joan Bristol, Martin Nesvig, Louise Burkhart, Zeb Tortorici, and others, through its focus on the linkage between the Christian-Spanish notion of excess and heterodox/heretical practices of non-Spaniards. As we gain a greater understanding of the overall ritual and religious landscape of colonial society, methodologies like Hagler's allow us to more deeply probe the conceptual landscape that mediated between orthodox practice and local, nonelite

devotional and ritual practices. I look forward to future studies that engage in an intertwined cultural and spatial mapping of semantic categories associated with religious belief.

Although the study succeeds at illustrating its primary claims concerning excess as a marker illustrating the gulf between orthodox religious beliefs and local religious practices, there are some areas that could be further fleshed out. Many examples reveal the close link between Indigenous people and Afro-descended people. Yet the analysis rarely delves into the realm of racial identity and its impact on the practices and beliefs under study. Implicitly the evidence presented shows that imposed Spanish categories of race such as *indio*, *mulato*, *mestizo*, *lobo*, and others did not serve as useful markers for the ritual and religious landscape of nonelites. Deeper attention to socioracial categories could prove useful to illuminating the way in which local ritual practice transcended racial categories. In fact, the realm of nonorthodox practice appears to have represented a shared social and cultural framework linking people of diverse socioracial categories. Additionally, the chronological sweep of this study makes mapping the evolution of ritual practice over time and space difficult. Obviously, the preservation of archival evidence for these practices is not uniform or complete; however, a greater attention to change over time and space could provide insights into the specific forces that shaped local religion across New Spain.

Sins of Excess is well written and deeply researched. The prose flows well and is accessible to scholars and students of all levels. The rich and excellently cited archival sources provide a trove of examples for scholars and graduate students examining these issues. Overall, Hagler's study draws our attention to how the Spanish notion of excess shaped the politics of religion and ritual practice in colonial Mexico.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488075

Silver: Transformational Matter. Edited by HELEN HILLS. Proceedings of the British Academy. London: British Academy, 2023. Photographs. Illustrations. Figures. Notes. Glossary. Index. xvii, 253 pp. Cloth, $115.00.

Helen Hills ha reunido una decena de sugerentes ensayos sobre las distintas formas de existencia material de la plata, sus representaciones y formas simbólicas y culturales, así como el lugar que adquirió en los procesos globales de circulación de monedas, objetos, manifestaciones artísticas y literarias, para conformar un haz de interpretaciones sobre un metal que ha sido mucho más que dinero. Con este trabajo de edición, además, nos encamina a repensar las prácticas discursivas sobre los metales desde distintas disciplinas, no sólo históricas, antropológicas o económicas, sino desde la filosofía, las letras, el arte y el conocimiento de los metales. Se trata de una obra estimulante, diversa, bien estructurada y de lectura amena en sus múltiples narrativas y recursos visuales e interpretativos. Por restricciones de espacio, nos ocuparemos únicamente de algunos capítulos, invitando a la lectura del todo el volumen.

En su ensayo "Gold, Silver, Power, and Abuse: The Incorporation and Erasure of Indigenous Knowledges in Spanish Colonial Metalwork", Allison Bigelow nos propone un camino para desentrañar los saberes nativos sobre el rescate, separación y labrado de metales. Para lograrlo, acude a leyendas, conocimientos de plantas, ciclos de lluvias, uso térmico solar y concepciones míticas de la disposición de los metales en ecosistemas tan diferenciados como La Española, en la colonización temprana, y el Alto Perú, con la introducción del método de amalgamación de la plata. La narrativa está inscrita en una pluralidad lingüística que va del taíno al guaní, y que introdujo una complejidad comprensiva del mito y la concepción ritual de la división del trabajo en el rescate del oro.

En los Andes, la concepción nativa sobre las características de las tierras minerales, situadas a distinta profundidad, estaba asociada a las partes del cuerpo, o "estados" (p. 35), que en quechua y aymara se consignaban en diccionarios bilingües como *chaupi*, *mitta*, *pactas mitta* o *pactasak* (quechua) y *taypirana* (aymara). La traducción cromática española asoció las tierras al sistema de castas y eso influyó en las traducciones europeas que incorporaron analogías de corte racial a las distintas propiedades de los minerales. Con ello, no sólo se invisibilizó el conocimiento nativo, sino que se le suplantó y solapó con conceptos eurocéntricos raciales.

Thomas Cummins, en su ensayo "The *Atocha*'s Silver, c. 1622: Ingots, Aquillas, and the Intersection of Values", parte del imaginario de la literatura cervantina acerca de la riqueza de Potosí en el siglo xvii para un interesante análisis de distintas piezas rescatadas del naufragio de *Nuestra Señora de Atocha*, ocurrido en las costas de Florida el 5 de septiembre de 1622. Lo relevante del capítulo está en las lecturas a que somete las piezas de orfebrería de tradición incaica. Inscritas en platos, cuencos y en las *aquillas* de plata y su réplica en cerámica, las piezas apelaban a la tradición de pares de vasos para brindar con chicha, entre el inka y los nobles, entre vivos y muertos. Las representaciones grabadas en su contorno dan testimonio de estéticas de amestizamiento y persistencia de motivos rituales que fueran considerados idolatría por el jesuita Pablo Joseph de Arriaga –quien paradójicamente murió en el naufragio mientras viajaba en el *Santa Margarita*, que acompañaba a la flota del *Atocha*–. Estos rasgos son centrales para el desarrollo de la hipótesis de Cummins acerca de la continuidad del ritual incaico, habida cuenta del hallazgo de los pares de aquillas embalados en parejas y destinados a la península como "cosas extraordinarias" (p. 62), quizá para la colección de Felipe II. En conjunto, su lectura etnográfica y estética es una exquisitez analítica que merece recalcarse.

Maggie Bolton nos remite a otra escala de interpretación en su texto "Flowing Silver and Ephemeral Cities: Working the Ruins of Colonial Silver Mines", sobre la relación entre la minería y la cosmogonía quechua. Bolton hace énfasis en el vínculo quechua entre la tierra que se cultiva y el metal que se licúa y petrifica. En su inquietante investigación, la autora se adentró en la vida de Sud Lípez, Bolivia: un pequeño pueblo en ruinas que vivió un explosivo auge minero entre 1640 y 1690. Dicho poblado generó una memoria compleja sobre las virtudes de la "plata líquida" entendida como flujo de riqueza y prosperidad. Hoy en día, esa memoria se ha petrificado y dejado en ruinas su testimonio de auge y decadencia. Para la antropóloga, el interés está puesto en el cambio simbólico que ocurrió entre la época colonial, "de los españoles" (p. 83), y el presente, lo que permite hacer un recorrido entre la historia, el mito y la observación contextual de la vida de la

familia minera para poner materialidad en la crónica, proponer una (re)interpretación del mito y recuperar el entrelazamiento entre la materia metálica y quienes la extraen, refinan y trabajan. Se trata de una nueva historia que propone una réplica ante la relación rota entre la tierra y sus productos. Quizá el mito de la "plata líquida" volverá a contarse con el llamado "oro blanco" de otra era tecnológica global.

El espléndido capítulo de Kris Lane, "Mutant Money: The Globe-Trotting Career of 17th-Century Silver Cash", nos hace reflexionar sobre las mutaciones de la plata en los distintos contextos temporales y espaciales, apelando a las formas y transformaciones del metal en su curso como moneda y metal maleable, y a las múltiples maneras en que respondió a las guerras, la vanidad monárquica, los usos multiculturales de cambio y las estafas que acompañaron la adopción de un patrón metálico global. Su historia no solamente describe esa complejidad, sino que nos sugiere la categoría de "dinero mutante" para analizar procesos de dimensiones globales con actores locales: del gran comercio de los estados imperiales y las compañías comerciales a las prácticas de captura y cambio entre signos monetarios diversos.

Pero las virtudes de la plata son también su maldición, como bien refiere Lane, ya que las depreciaciones y falsificaciones del dinero, en su forma monetaria o metálica, fueron una práctica que involucró a soberanos, mercaderes y pícaros. El dinero mutante es dinero social, que en sus mutaciones enriquece y empobrece. El gran fraude de plata potosina del siglo xvii le permite ver la escala global y las prácticas locales que produjeron esta "dinero mutante". El gran desajuste de los sistemas monetarios globales, con beneficiarios locales, trastocó la fe monetaria y arruinó el prestigio de Felipe IV y la monarquía española, pero el mundo encontró en la mutabilidad de la plata la solución al colapso de la unidad monetaria hispanoamericana, en nuevas *rupias*, *abasis* y *lion dollars*, *chelines* y *ducados* reacuñados, y la degradación del premio al peso americano por los chinos. La narrativa de Lane, estructurada en múltiples escalas, es una invitación a una mayor creatividad cuando se trata del dinero, más allá del enfoque de economistas que miran el dinero moderno sin historicidad ni complejidad cultural.

No resulta fácil concluir con una síntesis de los textos que componen este libro, pero sí se puede elegir entre distintos cauces que confluyen en un portentoso caudal de renovación de miradas sobre un actor esquivo, pero ubicuo: la plata.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12487931

The Archaeology of Early Colonial Manila: A Hybrid City in Global History. By ELLEN HSIEH. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2025. Photographs. Maps. Figures. Tables. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xvi, 199 pp. Cloth, $90.00.

Ceramics, paintings, kitchens: How does one read colonial experience from such objects and settings? This is the question that frames Ellen Hsieh's *The Archaeology of Early Colonial Manila: A Hybrid City in Global History*. Read straightforwardly, the book sounds a now familiar theme: Manila, as part of the Iberian colonial world, was a multicultural, even

global city. Yet how sixteenth-century residents enacted this—actually and materially—is not so clear. Hsieh is therefore both brave and right to take this theme on.

Two case studies anchor her book: ceramics excavated from Intramuros and Parian, and the Boxer Codex, a late sixteenth-century manuscript painted in Manila. Hsieh acknowledges that this pairing is unexpected and tricky to navigate. And, indeed, her results are mixed. Yet the approach cleverly forces consideration of what kinds of histories can be written around once-common objects versus rare survivals.

To position her study, Hsieh surveys interpretive models—world systems, trade diasporas, Chinese merchant networks—before settling on postcolonial theories. Her sense of postcolonial archaeology draws primarily on work from the 1990s and early 2000s, resting heavily on archaeological projects from across New Spain: Florida, New Mexico, California, central Mexico. This emphasis on the Americas is notable, as it was not Hsieh's only choice (a point made clear by the comparative shipwreck archaeology mentioned later in the book). Yes, certainly, Manila formed part of the Iberian world, but her approach begs an important question: To understand the city, why privilege archaeologies of the Spanish Americas, as opposed, say, to those of East Asia or the Indian Ocean?

As a contribution to histories of early modern colonialism and the Philippines, this book's originality lies in its careful study of ceramics and the interpretive issues that these clay artifacts raise. Rather than present new finds, Hsieh studies material excavated by different groups from the 1960s to the 2000s. Nearly all fragments, these ceramics were pulled from four sites in Intramuros (the Ayunatmiento, Iglesia de San Ignacio, Beaterio de la Compañía de Jesús, and Maestranza) and two in Parian (Mehan Garden, Arroceros Forest Park). Working almost salvage-style, Hsieh makes a strong case for revaluing understudied and disparate artifact collections (what others, in other contexts, have irreverently called debris fields).

The most compelling discussions situate porcelain—that darling of galleon trade literature—within a broader cultural mix. For instance, Hsieh describes earthenware intentionally studded with imported blue-and-white porcelain chips. In these ceramics, craftspeople embedded porcelain fragments seemingly in reverse; decorative surfaces face the clay body, exposing plain white interiors. While not unique to the Philippines, this shaking of traditional sign systems makes one sit up, take notice. Hsieh's datasets also reveal that more porcelain than majolica was used in Intramuros (94.6 percent of all serving vessels), echoing patterns found in Guam. In Parian, she asserts that neither the shapes, origins, nor quality of the porcelains found there precisely parallel those of Intramuros—divergences that likely betray Minnanese diasporic histories. Indigenous-made ceramics, used in both Intramuros and Parian, inspire Hsieh to make a fascinating interpretive turn: to colonial kitchens, Indigenous gendered labor, and Manila's foodways. Brief but provocative, her comments strike a spark for further research.

When Hsieh shifts to the Boxer Codex, image histories take center stage. Comprised of over 600 pages and dozens of hand-painted, color images on mulberry paper, the codex is a compendium that entangles Manila with other Asian locales. And today it survives as a one-off. Little is known about its ownership, colonial-period uses, and circulation. A tenuousness therefore infuses Hsieh's attempts to connect the manuscript

to colonial life in the city. This is accentuated by her willingness to discuss but not theorize hybridity, otherness, and collaboration, all of which relate to the manuscript's production. That said, Hsieh's most interesting comments turn the limelight on East Asian imagery, bringing to bear linguistic expertise that few scholars based in Latin American studies possess. We learn, for instance, that painters of the Boxer Codex drew iconographic and compositional inspiration from popular Chinese prints—a counterpoint to the thousands of European engravings trafficked across the Iberian Catholic world. Here, Hsieh's analysis flips the geographic script, privileging East Asian histories and networks rather than those of the Spanish Americas.

Ultimately, Hsieh's book presents Manila as hinge: One must turn both east and west to understand the city yet also look locally. Just when and why one should turn in one direction rather than another is, today, under debate. And this makes Hsieh's book timely. Admittedly, this project would have benefited from a more creative and substantial dissertation-to-book conversion. Yet there is much here that deserves praise. Through her presentation of little-known ceramic histories, Hsieh points evocatively to the ways that calculated and implicit decisions—choices about quality, origin, and cultural meaning—structured daily life in Manila. Methodologically her work invites new thinking about what constitutes coherence in the sources that we choose to anchor historical reconstructions. For Latin Americanists, the book's most significant contribution may be its documentation of material practices that diverge from established American patterns. In no small way, Hsieh's findings challenge assumptions about Iberian colonial cultural formation and hegemony, insisting that we reconsider what represents the exception, what the rule.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12487939

The New Kingdom of Granada: The Making and Unmaking of Spain's Atlantic Empire. By SANTIAGO MUÑOZ ARBELÁEZ. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2025. Maps. Figures. Table. Notes. Bibliography. Index. x, 315 pp. Paper, $29.95.

Sometime in 1578, don Diego de la Torre stood before King Philip II to denounce the corrupt royal officials running the Audiencia of Santa Fe. Torre was the cacique of Turmequé, a Muisca town between Bogotá and Tunja. He was also a bicultural mestizo and a feared radical Indigenous leader. Torre would spend the next few years at court attempting to advance a political project aimed at transforming the New Kingdom of Granada's governance. He delivered documents, maps, and paintings infused with the logic of the Spanish Empire in which his acute and sophisticated knowledge of Spanish legal and intellectual traditions were in evidence. Torre, extraordinarily, was able to convince the king to send a *visitador* across the Atlantic to examine the audiencia's workings and remove his enemies, the audiencia's royal officials, from their posts.

Santiago Muñoz Arbeláez's beautifully written book is inhabited by a series of characters, like Torre, whose world escaped those boundaries drawn by existing narratives

about sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish colonization. As Muñoz Arbeláez explains, the New Kingdom represented a new scale of colonial governance, one that emerged in a decentralized space without a common language or preexisting dominant polities. European colonists there were effectively corralled by a constellation of Indigenous groups. Employing institutional intellectual practices and "textual technologies" (p. 16), Spaniards stereotyped and imagined Indigenous groups, using cohesive political and geographically based labels, as friends (those from the high plateau where Bogotá was located) and enemies (those from the hot, low-lying lands to the west). This history, around which Muñoz Arbeláez's book revolves, provides evidence of a new model for thinking about early governance in Latin America. It also centers Indigenous politics and agency in the geographic and politically racialized imagination of Colombia. The book traces the origin of ideas about cold (Andean) and hot territories in Colombia as places of, respectively, civilization and barbarism, before the nineteenth century, as previous historians argued, to the tropes of imperial officers and their interactions with Indigenous populations living in and around the formidable Colombian central mountain Andean range.

Through eight chapters and an epilogue, the book examines new evidence and revisits well-known episodes to reframe our understanding of the New Kingdom's history. For all his interest in intellectual history, Muñoz Arbeláez firmly locates politics within the constraints and possibilities of the material. For instance, in chapter 3, he upends a foundational premise of Colombian history by arguing that the economy of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century New Kingdom did not revolve around gold. Instead, he convincingly demonstrates that the New Kingdom's fiscal and economic apparatuses functioned based on a hybrid Indigenous economic system that depended on commerce in treasured textiles called mantas.

Though Muñoz Arbeláez's book is anchored in political history, it pays close attention to how anthropologists and ethnographers have incorporated the study of religion and ritual into the study of Amerindian political economies. Under these lenses, the myth of the stereotyped, violent, and cannibalistic Pijaos who inhabited the Magdalena Valley lowlands, west of Bogotá, becomes a complex, rich history of the decentralized Carib peoples' radical and creative anticolonial projects. The Pijaos employed both centuries-old military tactics and sophisticated diplomatic and political strategies and procedures, such as the ritualistic consumption and incorporation of enemies into their ranks, to launch one of the Western Hemisphere's earliest and most determined anticolonial projects. Muñoz Arbeláez also shows in the book's final chapter how, interested in the riches promised by silver and gold deposits in Pijao territory, the Spanish Empire launched a brutal and intentional genocidal war that decimated, as much as the mita system, Indigenous populations and precipitated the arrival of thousands of enslaved Africans to the region.

As Muñoz Arbeláez shows, the Indigenous societies in and around Colombia's Cordillera Central were not naive cultural anachronisms who unthinkingly went against or meekly adapted to Spanish ways. They played a game of accommodation, utilizing Spanish law and justice traditions, and fought when necessary. Amerindians are victims

of *aperreamiento* but also avengers of cacique killings. They were also learned intellectuals versed in European mores, arguing before imperial courts on both sides of the Atlantic, who utilized the Spanish imperial apparatus to further their own interests with astounding effectiveness.

The book is, as Muñoz Arbeláez recognizes, limited in scope. We learn little about the governorships of Cartagena, Santa Marta, and Popayán, or the New Kingdom's interactions with them. The book also suffers from some repetition, and claims about Muisca people's engagement with European intellectual traditions could be tempered given the limited evidence available. The book is also thin on the crucial ways that religion, politics, and power intersected in the region, ground covered in a wonderful complement to this book, Juan Fernando Cobo Betancourt's *The Coming of the Kingdom: The Muisca, Catholic Reform, and Spanish Colonialism in the New Kingdom of Granada* (2024). My misgivings are, however, minor. Muñoz Arbeláez offers a luminous, imaginative, and bold rewriting of early Colombian history. This will be required reading for Colombianistas, Latin Americanists, and, more generally, any scholar interested in Indigenous history and the long history of anticolonialism in the Americas.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488259

Child Martyrs and Militant Evangelization in New Spain: Missionary Narratives, Nahua Perspectives. By STEPHANIE SCHMIDT. The William and Bettye Nowlin Series in Art, History, and Culture of the Western Hemisphere. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2024. Figures. Notes. Bibliography. Index. vii, 213 pp. Cloth, $45.00.

At its heart, this book addresses the role of children in early evangelization efforts in central Mexico, with a primary focus on their roles as victims and instigators of violence. To achieve this, Stephanie Schmidt provides a close reading of the Spanish and Nahuatl texts relating the tales of three boy martyrs and the Spanish texts recounting a group of Tlaxcalan schoolboys who killed a Nahua priest. The book is well written with clear prose and makes excellent use of the comparative eye. Each chapter's detailed and often philological examination of the tales and their retelling through various accounts makes this a read best suited to academics and graduate students.

Throughout the book, the boy martyrs of Tlaxcala receive the lion's share of attention, and this is understandable given the sources and their overall popularity. Indeed, in 2017, Pope Francis canonized the three Nahua boys who lost their lives in the late 1520s while preaching and enforcing Christianity. The boys are known in Mexico today, and it is not uncommon to see them represented in paintings and murals throughout various churches and public spaces. Yet the most popular version of the story derives from Fray Toribio de Benavente Motolinía's sixteenth-century *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España*. Engaging in the important scholarly trend largely initiated by James Lockhart and called the New Philology, which employs Indigenous-language texts to reveal additional

voices in the historical narrative, Schmidt adds another voice to the narrative, this time from a Nahuatl text.

In 1601, the Franciscan Juan Bautista Viseo and other Nahua collaborators published a Nahuatl account of the martyrdom of the three boys. No examples of this original edition survive. However, Francisco de Loaysa and other scribes made a copy of the text in the early eighteenth century, and it is this copy that Schmidt primarily utilizes in her book, along with other Spanish sources that discuss the events. As she herself notes, Schmidt is not the first to examine this Nahuatl account of the three boy martyrs. Robert Haskett wrote an article examining the text in 2008, and Schmidt's book, in some ways, can be seen as an extension of this initial examination. Moreover, many others have examined the tale's Spanish renditions. Yet throughout the work, Schmidt employs transparent writing to inform the reader of her contributions to existing analyses and demonstrates what she and the Nahuatl text have to offer.

Chapter 1 details the various Spanish and Nahuatl works that relate the story of the three boy martyrs, their authors, and their perspectives and motives. Chapter 2 examines the story of Cristobalito, the Nahua boy murdered by his father, Acxotecatl, in 1527 for haranguing him for his persistent precontact, non-Christian behavior, including idol worship. Chapter 3 addresses the other two boy martyrs, Antonio and Juan, who died in 1529 in Cuauhtinchan at the hands of the locals for destroying their sacred objects and preaching Christianity. For the next chapter, Schmidt leaves Bautista's Nahuatl text and largely turns to Alonso de Zorita's *Relación de la Nueva España* to examine the story of a group of Nahua schoolboys who stoned a Nahua priest, the violent actions of the early Franciscans, and Zorita's disapproval. An introduction and conclusion bookend these chapters.

At the heart of her analysis of the boy martyrs is the secondary reading of the traditional account that Bautista's Nahuatl text offers. The various Spanish versions of the account portray the boys along the lines of a hagiography. Whereas the Nahuatl text largely parallels its Spanish counterparts, it contributes quiet questions and alternate interpretations not seen in the other corpus. As a result, traditional villains in the story could be seen as respectable and legitimate, and traditional innocent victims as potentially disrespectful and imprudent. These and many other contributions of the Nahuatl text primarily are achieved through its employment of Nahua metaphors, semantic couplets, and terms and phrases infused with deep cultural significance that could alter the meaning of the text.

Throughout her chapters on the boy martyrs, Schmidt examines the Nahuatl text to tease out this secondary reading to the traditional narrative with alternate interpretations and meanings. The author states that "such interventions. . . . subtly transform this story as a hagiographical narrative, allowing for conflicting interpretations" (p. 111). The majority of such interventions are exposed to the reader through philological analysis of the Nahuatl and connections to the Nahua worldview to uncover intriguing insights—some more firmly grounded than others—and also comparisons with the Spanish narrative derived from various works. Schmidt's use of the comparative eye is fantastic and helps highlight the contributions of the Nahuatl text. Yet the lack of a full translation of the

text itself leaves the readers wanting and the historiography still in need of an English translation of the Nahuatl account.

Schmidt views the early evangelization of New Spain through the lens of violence, particularly "a form of brutal epistemic violence" that friars forced Nahua youth to participate in (p. 168), and woven throughout the work and its exposure of the Nahuatl text's contributions are proposed evidence and impacts of such. Certainly, physical violence has accompanied Christianity's conversion efforts, even long before New Spain (think of Charlemagne and the Saxons). And certainly the friars' "tactics exposed children to violent reprisals" (p. 10) and even used violence on the children themselves. Yet, as unfortunate as this is, and as Haskett originally noted in his article, violence employed in the education of young children existed within precolonial Nahua culture as well. And Bautista's collaborators were certainly aware of the many forms of violence that accompanied Mexica conquest, even the use of boys—roughly the same age as the boy martyrs—as porters on the battlefield. While obviously not condoning violence, its ubiquitous presence in both cultures warrants caution when inferring what Bautista's Nahua collaborators may or may not have inserted in their account of the child martyrs in reaction to the violence of early evangelization efforts.

That said, the role of Nahua youth in evangelization and the violence exercised both on and by them deserves scholarly attention. And herein lies the important contribution of Schmidt's work. True, it offers readers different narratives full of new insights and possibilities of meaning. Yet it also places children at the center of the evangelization narrative and gives needed attention to those who often go overlooked.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488131

Historia mexicana. By JUAN DE TOVAR. Edited by JAIME MARROQUÍN ARREDONDO and JOSÉ LUIS NOGALES BAENA. Madrid: Iberoamericana; Frankfurt: Vervuert; Seville: Editorial Universidad de Sevilla, 2025. Figures. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. 428 pp. Paper, €52.00.

Jesuits penned many histories in New Spain that they never printed because of either censorship or costs. Among these works is the Codex Tovar (ca. 1587), an illustrated account of the origins, wanderings, customs, and calendrical systems of the Mexica. Written by Juan de Tovar, the text is currently accessible online via the Internet Archive and is physically housed at the John Carter Brown Library. Even though there are several modern transcriptions of the Codex Tovar, *Historia mexicana* is the first complete edition that includes both the full text and all the accompanying illustrations. Editors Jaime Marroquín Arredondo and José Luis Nogales Baena have produced a highly accessible version of the Codex Tovar for a wider audience, one that is indispensable for anyone interested in manuscript cultures, Indigenous histories, and early historical writing in colonial Spanish America.

The textual archaeology of the Codex Tovar is complicated because it must be read together with other colonial manuscripts, not all of which have survived. As the editors

explain in their introduction, Tovar prepared a history of the Mexica that, for reasons unknown, was eventually confiscated and lost. Before colonial authorities seized Tovar's manuscript, Diego Durán used it to write his *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e islas de Tierra Firme* (1581). Later, Tovar drew on Durán's *Historia* to draft a second history of the Mexica. He made a clean copy of this draft—which is the Codex Tovar—for José de Acosta, who needed it to finish his *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* (1590). After this, Tovar sent his draft to a scribe to produce a second copy, which today is known as the Codex Ramírez and is preserved in Mexico's National Library of Anthropology and History.

The editors' hypothesis that the Codex Tovar and the Codex Ramírez are copies of the same draft is more credible than the more common view that one is a copy of the other. Not only this, but the editors' approach to colonial manuscript cultures is more nuanced than previous scholarship. In a nutshell, nineteenth-century Mexican scholars posited that Tovar, Durán, and Fernando Alvarado Tezozómoc drew on one common source in Nahuatl. Robert H. Barlow named this source the Crónica X, which many after him have sought to decipher. But as the editors explain, the quest to find one work by a sole Indigenous author is misguided. Without disregarding the possibility of a Crónica X, the editors place more emphasis on the collaborative nature of colonial scholarship. Jesuits like Tovar turned to teams of Indigenous intellectuals who communicated their histories of the Mexica in textual, visual, and oral forms.

In their transcription, the editors seek to offer the Codex Tovar as Tovar intended it for Acosta by comparing it with the Codex Ramírez. For example, they incorporate Tovar's marginal notes, eliminate word repetitions, and correct the text when there were omissions of vowels or even entire words. To avoid excessive footnotes, they only reference a portion of these changes and provide a helpful list of others at the end of the transcription. Beyond cleaning up the Codex Tovar for greater readability, the editors modernized the punctuation and divided it into paragraphs. While I agree with their editorial decisions, it would have been helpful to have two parallel footnoting systems, one for marginal notes by Tovar and Acosta and the other for critical commentary. I also would have appreciated the folio numbers in brackets given that the Codex Tovar is available online.

Historia mexicana is visually stimulating, both the introduction and the transcription. The editors were wise to include images of the title page and the text, especially those with marginalia. Missing are reproductions of the spine, binding, and other endpapers with markings, all of which would have nicely complemented the discussion of provenance in the introduction. Since the illustrations from the first two parts appear in a separate section of the original manuscript, the editors decided to incorporate them within the text of their transcription as Tovar had indicated with folio numbers in the margins. All the illustrations, including those from the Codex Ramírez featured in an appendix, are accompanied by extensive descriptions and commentary. This feature is unique and rooted in the editors' respect for the *tlacuiloque* (painter-scribes), whose work they claim is just as important as the text.

Other helpful tools in *Historia mexicana* are the bibliography and index for the footnotes. Having said this, there is no index for either the introduction or the transcription. I

also would have liked a separate section in the bibliography for all the editions and translations of the Codex Tovar reviewed in the introduction. But these are minor quibbles that do not take away from a model example of how to prepare a critical edition of a colonial manuscript.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488187

Eighteenth–Nineteenth Centuries

La presidencia de José Ballivián (1841–1847): Construcción del Estado e imposición de un proyecto nacional en Bolivia. By POL COLÀS. La Paz: Plural Editores, 2024. Maps. Figure. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. 355 pp. Paper, $21.55.

On the morning of November 18, 1841, José Ballivián commanded the Bolivian army that defeated its Peruvian counterpart in the fields of Ingavi, in the department of La Paz. Although he had been sworn in as president at the end of September, this victory marked the beginning of his term and, in the long run, meant more than a mere defense of the territory and national honor, becoming the "asiento" on which his legitimacy in power rested, at least in his early years. Based on this argument, Pol Colàs analyzes Ballivián's presidency to investigate the facets involved in the construction of the state during his term in office and the foundations and proposals of his national project.

Colàs begins *La presidencia de José Ballivián (1841–1847)*, partly based on his doctoral thesis presented at the University of Barcelona in 2023, by leaning toward the renewed current of political history. Thus his work is among recent scholarship (by Marta Irurozqui and Víctor Peralta, to name two) that discusses the concept of *caudillismo* and the idea of military caudillos as holders of absolute power, an idea first forwarded about Ballivián by authors such as Alcides Arguedas in the early decades of the twentieth century. On the one hand, Ballivián submitted to democratic institutions, such as elections, and other forms of republican order, which in some ways gave his mandate legitimacy. On the other hand, although he made use of the political capital that he had built up through his participation in the Battle of Ingavi, the actions of his administration were not entirely the work of the executive branch, much less the result of individual effort. In chapter 1, Colàs suggests a more complex framework involving a dispute between two centers of power: La Paz in the north and Potosí and Sucre in the south, whose representation in executive and legislative positions, respectively, generated heated debates and had an impact on the plans that were implemented.

This did not prevent his government program during these years from having various aims. Thus Colàs analyzes the relationship between the state under construction and the main governmental forces, the control of institutions linked to the executive branch, the efforts to dissolve local powers, and the implementation of reforms related to education and the military (in chapter 2); Ballivián's economic policy, which sought to address pressing fiscal needs by seeking sources of financing and combating excessive

public spending (in chapter 3); the media debate over protectionism and free trade and the administration's pragmatic stance on this question, as well as its quest to consolidate a hegemonic natural resource, whether it be cascarilla, guano, or silver (in chapter 4); and what Colàs calls, following the work of Pilar García Jordán, the "giro" of policies and administrative actions related to the "Orientes" (in chapter 5).

This last chapter deserves special attention. In it, Colàs proposes three pillars of analysis—diplomatic, economic, and ideological-cultural—to examine the measures applied in the areas covering the Amazon River basin, the Río de la Plata, and its tributaries: the promotion of reconnaissance and military expeditions, the founding of missions, and efforts to ensure the physical presence of institutions, authorities, and officials, among other measures, which were not always successful. He does not present the "giro orientalista" as part of a territorial project as such but rather frames the regional specificities of Beni and Chaco as the settings for the expansion of the government's plans, with the aim of achieving economic progress, mainly through trade.

For all these reasons, Colàs succeeds in presenting Ballivián's project: an option on the path to state formation, to whose apparatus more "brazos estatales" could surely be added than those studied by Colàs here. One of the peculiarities of the book is that, despite Ballivián being its central protagonist, Colàs does not stop to outline his biography or describe the intrigues of his private life, aspects usually central to the treatment of so-called caudillos—a term that Colàs rejects when referring to Ballivián—in traditional historiography. To counteract this historiography, Colàs draws on a wide range of documentary sources and focuses on Ballivián's work in government. This makes reading *La presidencia de José Ballivián (1841–1847)* essential for a deeper understanding of nineteenth-century Bolivia.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488147

Atlantic Crossroads in Lisbon's New Golden Age, 1668–1750. By CACEY BOWEN FARNSWORTH. Iberian Encounter and Exchange, 475–1755. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2024. Map. Figures. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xiii, 228 pp. Cloth, $124.95.

Atlantic Crossroads in Lisbon's New Golden Age, 1668–1750 by Cacey Bowen Farnsworth is a welcome contribution to an Atlantic world historiography that often favors imperial frameworks over place-based narratives. The book accomplishes for the early modern era what the scholarship on global cities did for studies of the late twentieth century: It situates in specific places the institutional arrangements and concentration of functions that supported globalization. The focus on the Luso-Atlantic is also a nice respite from works that too often center the Anglo-Atlantic. With Lisbon as its reference point, the book can, for instance, pay close attention to the impact that West African and Brazilian interests and people had on Atlantic exchanges. It thus reconstructs an Atlantic

world where European nations were not necessarily driving historical forces and where the North and South Atlantic are connected through urban centers like Lisbon.

In five thematic chapters, Farnsworth convincingly demonstrates that Lisbon between 1668 and 1750 was quintessentially an Atlantic city. Following distinct demographic, diplomatic, cultural, economic, and political threads of analysis, he reveals a city at the intersection of Atlantic world currents and local actions by urban residents, elites, and rulers eager to manage their relationship to that world. Here, Carl Nightingale's insight that cities are agents of both historical continuity and change is on full display. Efforts to transform Lisbon's space and strengthen coherent and exclusionary political communities aimed to buttress existing dynamics and identities that were threatened by external pressures. Conversely, the concentration of diverse human interests and initiative in Lisbon brought about novelty and disruption that redirected the city's trajectory. The tension between these forces of continuity and change generated much of the episodic history that Farnsworth explores in *Atlantic Crossroads*.

Scholars and students of the Atlantic world will recognize the main topics that form the backbone of the book. Chapter 1 addresses the Atlantic slave trade by examining the presence in Lisbon of Africans and African descendants from Brazil. It delves into the transformative effects of this migration on Lisbon's demography, labor dynamics, and urban culture. It concomitantly explains the uses of discrimination and violence to prevent what he terms Iberianized Black Lisboans (i.e., integrated into metropolitan society) from undermining local white prerogatives. In chapter 2, Atlantic military and political entanglements—the Portuguese Restoration War (1640–68) and the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14)—and the discovery of gold and diamond mines in Brazil serve as the backdrop for England's rising commercial dominance in Portugal. Dependency on English military aid, manufactures, and financial credit, first by necessity and later by choice, produced disparate trends in Lisbon, changing consumer culture and enriching some while hurting the economic and social prospects of others. The resulting tension shaped an urban environment that was often hostile to the English. A convergence of religious zealotry and persecution was one manifestation of that hostility and is the topic of chapter 3. The pressure that Atlantic encounters—demographic, economic, and cultural—exercised on Lisboans' religious and socioeconomic identity invited the resurgence of the Inquisition, which aggressively targeted in Lisbon the New Christian (or converted Jewish) mercantile community that had benefited disproportionately from the English trade, Africans and Afro-Brazilians, and English Protestants.

The book's two final chapters focus more specifically on the reign of João V (1706–50). The monarch's haphazard and failed attempts at promoting manufacturing and modernizing the Portuguese economy are the topic of chapter 4. Such efforts were ultimately undermined by the influx of colonial riches from Brazil, which intensified consumption at rates that Portugal's artisans could not match and encouraged further economic reorientation toward trade, mostly with England, to supply the empire. Chapter 5 investigates João V's efforts to centralize power and transform Lisbon into a functional and opulent imperial capital through infrastructural and architectural urban reform and royal patronage of academies of learning. Together with chapter 4, it

offers a novel perspective on eighteenth-century European absolutism. It tethers the monarch's decision-making to Atlantic economic, cultural, and material influences and his elevation of the city into a monument to his absolute and enlightened rule to the crown's deepening dependency on Atlantic resources and consequent vulnerability.

Farnsworth accomplishes much with *Atlantic Crossroads*. Scholars of the Atlantic world will appreciate in particular his effort to provide a localized version of Atlantic history that illuminates the diversity of experiences with and reactions to Atlantic influences. Moreover, he makes a strong case for the continued pursuit of Atlantic history as a field of study. Lisbon's deep transformation between 1668 and 1750, he persuasively shows, must be understood in relation to the city's place within an evolving Atlantic world.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488027

El Primer Imperio Mexicano (1821–1823). Edited by IVANA FRASQUET and JOSEP ESCRIG. Ciencias Sociales. Zaragoza: Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza; Valencia: Editorial Tirant Lo Blanch, 2025. Map. Figures. Notes. 602 pp. Paper, Mex$839.00.

The experience of the First Mexican Empire has long been forgotten by the historiography. This may be explained because it lasted less than two years (from September 1821 to April 1823) and failed to establish a long-lasting monarchical political system (as was the case in Brazil [1822–89]). Its royalist makeup has tended to be seen as an unfortunate blip in Mexico's proud republican tradition, undeserving of serious study because of its ephemeral, reactionary nature. From the perspective of Mexico's official history, it was always going to prove problematic that independence was consummated by a former royalist officer who, having fought against the insurgents during the War of Independence (1810–21), not only went on to forge a monarchy but allowed himself to be crowned its emperor. It is not surprising, bearing in mind that Agustín de Iturbide's exploits were never going to sit comfortably in a nationalist guiding narrative that revolves around Mexico's inherent liberalism and republicanism, that the historiography has depicted the First Mexican Empire as some kind of unfortunate counterrevolutionary parenthesis in the country's inexorable march toward emancipation. Having said this, the editors of the present volume, Ivana Frasquet and Josep Escrig, together with other notable historians such as Timothy E. Anna and Alfredo Ávila, have, over the last three decades, published several seminal studies that have countered the manner in which the empire has been ignored or misrepresented. However, there was no single comprehensive volume on the period until now—in other words, one that systematically analyzed this first monarchical experiment (the second having taken place in 1864–67) from a comprehensive array of angles. *El Primer Imperio Mexicano* does precisely this, with the editors having organized the book, following their introductory chapter, around four sections dedicated respectively to the government (with chapters by Marco Antonio

Landavazo, Ivana Frasquet, Mariana Terán, Juan Carlos Sánchez Montiel, and Joaquín E. Espinosa Aguirre), politics (with chapters by Brian Connaughton, Luis Jáuregui, Jaime Hernández Díaz, Agustín Sánchez Andrés, and Josep Escrig), society (with chapters by Moisés Guzmán Pérez, Alicia Tecuanhuey Sandoval, Ana Carolina Ibarra, Laura Machuca Gallegos, and Iliria Olimpia Flores Carreño), and culture (with chapters by Mariana Ozuna Castañeda, Rosalina Ríos Zúñiga, Tomás Pérez Vejo, and Luis de Pablo Hammeken).

Frasquet and Escrig are to be congratulated not only for putting together a veritable dream team of scholars, assigning each one the study of a concrete aspect of the First Mexican Empire (e.g., the justice system, taxation, the armed forces, political violence, music), but for ensuring that all the chapters work together to create a book that can be read as if it had been written by a single author. This is no assortment of conference papers loosely connected by an overarching theme. It is a carefully curated collection of essays, which, read together, offers a necessary thought-provoking interpretation of the First Mexican Empire.

Unable to do justice to all 19 contributions, suffice it to say that the book, read as a whole, demonstrates that it is misguided to think of the monarchical experience as having been exceptional or a failure, or necessarily reactionary. Its formation was part of a lengthy process that started in Spain in 1808, with strong ties to the 1812 Cádiz Constitution and its reimplementation in 1820. Likewise, it shows the extent to which numerous groups came together, albeit for different reasons, to forge a government that was constitutional and liberal in its conception while defending a monarchical outlook at the same time. In this sense, the book forces us to think beyond the figure of Iturbide (as if the empire was all about him) and engage with all the other actors that coalesced around Mexico's first imperial project (e.g., congressional deputies, liberal army officers, priests, Indigenous communities, writers, educators, and musicians, be they men or women). Significantly, all the chapters point toward it having been a moment of transition, in which nothing was certain or predetermined and in which Iturbide's clash with congress and the regional authorities, be they the Cádiz-inspired provincial deputations or town councils (*ayuntamientos*), ultimately proved determining in bringing the First Mexican Empire to an end, notwithstanding the popular support that it enjoyed to start.

Just to flag some of the book's findings, the context was one that made the monarchism-liberalism equation a natural one. The congress, provincial deputations, and town councils all played a crucial role, corroborating further the importance that the Cádiz charter had in Mexico (with its defense of elections and the freedom of the press). Questions of faith and politics were as complex then as they were later; the priests' views proved to be as diverse as those of society at large, with some having championed the cause of Iturbide and others not, in the same way that Indigenous communities also proved divided in their positioning vis-à-vis the monarchy, with some able to exploit the autonomy of the ayuntamientos to retain the independence that they had enjoyed under the colonial *repúblicas de indios*. The more reactionary elements behind the empire were neither the majority nor entirely united. Women were far more influential in politics

than may have been previously noted. It was also during the First Mexican Empire that the Lancastrian methods of education were introduced and that writers such as José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi and José María Moreno Buenvecino started to write works that proved foundational in Mexico's new literary canon.

What becomes evident from all of this is that we need to rethink the view that the First Mexican Empire was an anomalous reactionary monarchical spell with no place in the natural political development of the Mexican nation. My sole criticism is that the book would have benefited from including a general bibliography at the end. However, this remains a major contribution to the historiography and will become the go-to book for anyone keen to understand what happened in Mexico between 1821 and 1823.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488227

Black Atlantic Crossings: The Lives and Anti-Racist Tactics of Booker T. Washington and Manuel R. Querino. By SABRINA GLEDHILL. Unsung Heroes in Black History. Crediton, UK: Editora Funmilayo Publishing, 2025. Photographs. Figures. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. 457 pp. Paper, $31.99.

A escrita da história atlântica tem avançado e contribuído com teorias e metodologias para novas pesquisas sobre escravidão e liberdade. Partindo desse modelo, *Black Atlantic Crossings: The Lives and Anti-Racist Tactics of Booker T. Washington and Manuel R. Querino*, de Sabrina Gledhill, apresenta metodologia de análise inovadora, ao mobilizar diferentes fontes primárias nos Estados Unidos e no Brasil. Seu estudo da trajetória de vida de dois intelectuais e líderes negros em sociedades escravistas elabora, com base em sólida pesquisa e consistente bibliografia, um profícuo diálogo com a historiografia da escravidão, das intelectualidades, da história afro-atlântica e comparativa.

Booker T. Washington e Manuel R. Querino nasceram em sociedades escravistas no século XIX. O primeiro nasceu cativo nos Estados Unidos, o segundo, livre, no Império do Brasil. Ambos mobilizaram a educação como estratégia para suplantar o racismo. Washington cria o Instituto Tuskegee, que viria a se tornar a primeira universidade negra nos Estados Unidos, desfrutando, em vida, de grande prestígio. Posteriormente, sofreu um processo de tentativa de apagamento – o que não foi efetivado, conforme demonstra a autora, por ter realizado registros escritos e fotográficos de si. Manuel Querino, por sua vez, foi aluno fundador do Liceu de Artes e Ofícios na Bahia, professor, funcionário público, abolicionista e republicano. Atuou politicamente, mas seu reconhecimento ocorre a partir de suas publicações no Instituto Geográfico e Histórico da Bahia, no qual atuou como membro.

Ao comparar os percursos de Washington e Querino em vida – apesar das disputas políticas e raciais – com as narrativas *post mortem* sobre os dois, Sabrina Gledhill demonstra o *modus operandi* do racismo em diferentes esferas, as disputas entre pares – negros e não negros –, mas demonstra, principalmente, a complexidade de uma sociedade forjada por séculos de escravização. O Atlântico Negro, acompanhando com Gledhill a argumentação

de Paul Gilroy, estava conectado de diferentes modos, elementos que tornam essa investigação de grande vulto e leitura obrigatória para os pesquisadores da história afro-atlântica, das intelectualidades negras, de biografias, autobiografias ou prosopografias.

A organização do livro se distancia dos modelos tradicionais biográficos ou autobiográficos. O primeiro capítulo, "Expanding the Black Atlantic: Contrasts and Connections Between the US and Brazil", expõe trajetórias por meio de aproximações e distanciamentos. Um ponto em comum, a educação da população negra como forma de liberdade real, permeia seus percursos de vida, suas relações sociais e estratégias, já que a educação foi negada por lei à população escravizada no Brasil e nos Estados Unidos. O tema educação prossegue no capítulo 2, "Self Portraits and 'the Eyes of Others' ", contudo, as autobiografias são as fontes privilegiadas. Histórias de vida que foram constituídas por meio de trabalho árduo, educação, relações sociais e políticas com diferentes sujeitos de distintas condições jurídicas, sociais e econômicas.

No capítulo 3, "Revision and Reclamation: The Posthumous Trajectories of Washington and Querino", a investigação de obituários publicados em periódicos acessa construções de memórias, de lembranças e de esquecimentos, como definidas por Michael Pollak. Narrativas destacam-se como elementos de poder no mundo iletrado. Os silenciamentos, igualmente eficazes, produziram esquecimentos com forte anseio de apagamento, como já demonstrara Michel-Rolph Trouillot. Sendo homens das letras, Washington e Querino escreveram suas histórias. Apesar disso, não lhes foi possível exercer domínio sobre outras escritas.

"Brazilian Readings of Booker T. Washington", o capítulo 4, enuncia a relação intrínseca e dialógica de Booker Washington com a educação, com o aprender, o ensinar e a instituição escolar. Em contrapartida, a autora identifica de que maneira intelectuais negros leram suas obras, principalmente o livro *Up from Slavery*, que o tornou conhecido e admirado por Manuel Querino. Estratégias distintas, tendo por base a defesa da educação, não os poupou de críticas severas. Querino, devido a problemas com associações e organizações, teve muitos inimigos.

Além de discursos, a escravidão moderna e seus fotógrafos produziam narrativas imagéticas "exóticas" na Bahia, ou "desumanas" em ambos os países. Washington e Querino ressignificaram o poder da imagem, forjando autoimagens positivas como estratégia antirracista. Tema central do capítulo 5, "Portrayals and Pushback: Deploying Images as an Anti-Racist Tactic", o poder das imagens apresenta-se como estratégia relevante em sociedades majoritariamente analfabetas. A escravidão – nos Estados Unidos e no Brasil –, com diferentes instrumentos de controle por um lado, produziu, por outro, elementos de sobrevivência e resistência. A dissimulação foi um deles, como argumenta a autora sobre as memórias de Booker T. Washington da canção ouvida às vésperas da abolição. Se antes a liberdade se referia ao mundo post mortem, com a proximidade da abolição passou a aludia ao presente, à liberdade do corpo vivo. Tal dissimulação em vida, presente no "tom conciliatório" com que Booker Washington escrevia, não seria mais necessária com a proximidade da morte (p. 227). Embora Washington tenha caído no esquecimento, deixou obra póstuma de valor inestimável. Querino, por sua vez, não reconhecido em vida, tem sua história recuperada na contemporaneidade. As trajetórias narradas por Sabrina

Gledhill demonstram que o Atlântico Negro produziu aproximações com fortes vínculos a partir de uma questão pungente: a educação da população negra.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488171

Canal Dreamers: The Epic Quest to Connect the Atlantic and Pacific in the Age of Revolutions. By JESSICA M. LEPLER. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2025. Maps. Figures. Notes. Index. xiv, 341 pp. Paper, $29.95.

Open any general history of the Panama Canal and you will invariably encounter a prefatory discussion of canal schemes across four centuries, from the earliest visions of Spanish explorers keen to create an artificial passage to India to the myriad nineteenth-century efforts by Britain, France, and the United States to locate and control an optimal isthmian route. Dreaming of transoceanic canals across Mesoamerica has had a deep history. But as Jessica Lepler points out in her wonderful new book, *Canal Dreamers*, few historians have paid attention to a formative though ultimately failed plan to construct a canal across Nicaragua in the 1820s, a plan that occurred in the context of the decline of the Spanish Empire in the Americas, financial crisis in England, and a political sea change in the United States. In turning her attention to Central America, Lepler, a scholar of the US early republican period, joins several US historians who have come to recognize the powerful transnational context of the Age of Revolutions.

Canal Dreamers begins with a map produced by don Manuel Antonio de la Cerda in Nicaragua in 1823 called the *Plano Ídeal*, which set in motion a flurry of activity connecting the United Provinces of the Center of America—one of the names by which the newly independent federation of Central American states went—to politicians, capitalists, intellectuals, and adventurers in the United States and Britain. From her encounter with this map, Lepler spins a complex narrative about a remarkable cast of characters who tried to make the *Plano Ideal* a reality. Most of these canal dreamers were influenced by the writings of Alexander von Humboldt, who, though he never visited Central America, wrote authoritatively about the possible routes for a transoceanic canal. Such inattention to the on-the-ground details of the Nicaragua route let imagination take over.

One of Lepler's central themes is contingency; hers is a story of a punctuated moment of possibility undone by bad timing. The 1820s was an era of canal building par excellence, epitomized by the Erie Canal and Thomas Telford's Caledonian Canal. In the wake of these successes, British capitalists, eager to find greater returns on their investments, looked amorously at canal opportunities in the Americas. But a growing financial crisis in England and the unwillingness of the British to recognize the new federation of Central American states undid any British plans to finance such a canal. The United States was also interested in the possibility of a Central American canal, particularly under the leadership of John Quincy Adams, who was James Monroe's secretary of state and then became president in 1825. But the inconclusive US election of 1824, which ultimately saw

the House of Representatives intervene and give Adams the presidency, hobbled Adams's administration. The rise of Andrew Jackson to political prominence spelled the end to the Era of Good Feelings and the emergence of the partisanship of the second American party system. Moreover, Jacksonian Democrats soured US relations with its Latin American sister republics. In such a context, Adams found supporting such an "external improvement" untenable. Finally, the political instability in Central America undid this moment of possibility. In 1825, the republic, envisioning a transisthmian canal as an important source of revenue, issued a call for proposals to build a canal across Nicaragua and set a deadline of February 1, 1826, but by 1827 the republic was being torn apart by civil war, and its provinces soon splintered into separate Central American nations. For all these reasons, the dream of a Nicaraguan canal quickly fell apart in the late 1820s.

None of this summary captures the most compelling part of Lepler's story: The Central Americans received multiple proposals to build a Nicaraguan canal, and in June 1826 the government signed an agreement with Charles de Beneski, an agent for an entity known as "the New York Company" that was owned by one Aaron H. Palmer. Beneski, a fabulist whose real name was Karol Benecke, was a Prussian soldier who managed to wheedle his way into the inner circle of Agustín de Iturbide, who briefly ruled postindependence Mexico before his abdication and execution. Beneski, who barely escaped Mexico with his head, then moved to New York, where he teamed up with Palmer, a linguist who tried his hand at law before moving into finance. The New York Company was a fiction; Palmer and Beneski planned to secure the canal contract and then create the company that would build the canal. To do so, they needed not only substantial financing but also a corporate charter from either the federal government or the State of New York. Much of the second half of *Canal Dreamers* follows the efforts of Beneski and Palmer to secure such support—efforts that, not surprisingly, ended in failure.

A brief review cannot do justice to the tangled complexity of Lepler's story and its many compelling characters. Deeply researched, profoundly contextual, beautifully written, and filled with intrigue, *Canal Dreamers* immerses us in a moment of possibility and subsequent failure that transformed US–Latin American relations and shaped future canal-building efforts in the region.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488283

The Birth of Democracy in South America. By RAÚL L. MADRID. Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025. Figures. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xvii, 362 pp. Paper, $35.99.

This ambitious and judicious study offers a comparative historical analysis of the "first wave of democratization in South America," spanning the period from independence to 1929. This wave corresponds to the uneven emergence of democracy across ten countries in the region and is defined as the first uninterrupted decade without major violations of a

minimalist set of democratic criteria: free and fair elections, respect for civil and political rights, and elected governments exercising effective control over policy and the armed forces. Given the historical period under consideration, the author, an endowed professor in the Department of Government at the University of Texas at Austin, accords limited weight to suffrage rights, particularly universal male suffrage.

To substantiate his claims, Raúl Madrid constructed two original and highly detailed databases. The first documents the history of presidential elections in Latin America, including levels of electoral competition, participation, and the degree of electoral freedom and fairness. The second catalogs the type, frequency, leadership origins, and duration of political revolts, distinguishing between insider and outsider challenges such as coups, mutinies, elite insurrections, and popular uprisings. These quantitative datasets are complemented by extensive qualitative evidence on the evolution of military institutions, political parties, and political regimes across the region.

By virtue of their technical rigor and commitment to causal explanation, generalization, and theory building, social scientific works grounded in comparative historical analysis may lack the narrative fluidity of conventional historical accounts. Their demanding research designs can, at times, strike traditional historians as overly schematic or as assemblages of predefined categories marshaled in support of broad claims. Moreover, as James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer—leading proponents of the approach—have noted, ongoing debates persist regarding its empirical scope, theoretical frameworks, and epistemological foundations. Nonetheless, like other influential comparative studies of nineteenth-century Latin American state formation and nation building by scholars such as Fernando López-Alves, Miguel A. Centeno, and Sebastián Mazzuca, Madrid's work is a substantive and rewarding contribution that merits close attention.

Consistent with the strongest examples of comparative historical analysis, the study is anchored in a clearly specified conceptual framework, with well-defined explanatory variables, operational criteria, measurements, and causal mechanisms. In addition to its explicit definition of democracy, the book offers precise conceptualizations and indicators of regime stability, military and party strength, and the incidence of "major" political revolts.

The theoretical argument is both coherent and persuasive, centering on the interactive effects of three key factors: military professionalization, the emergence of strong opposition parties, and factional divisions within ruling parties. Variations in the configuration and intensity of these factors help explain divergent political outcomes across the region. The analysis distinguishes among strong and enduring democracies (Chile and Uruguay), weak democracies (Argentina and Colombia), stable authoritarian regimes (Brazil, Peru, and Venezuela), and unstable authoritarian systems (Bolivia, Ecuador, and Paraguay).

The book is organized into eight thematic chapters. The opening chapter outlines the theoretical framework, followed by three chapters devoted to respectively measuring democratic strength, military power, and party organization. The final four chapters examine distinct combinations of these variables, assessing democratic and authoritarian

outcomes across the four country groupings. Overall, the findings suggest that strong militaries, organized opposition parties, divided ruling elites, and economic development can function as democratizing forces, depending on historical context.

This study is a valuable addition to the literature on state and nation building in nineteenth-century Latin America and carries significant implications for broader theories of democratization. It will be especially useful in graduate and advanced undergraduate courses in research methods, comparative politics, comparative history, and political history.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12487995

¡Viva Napoleón / Muera Bonaparte! Propaganda y opiniones contrastadas en el mundo hispánico (1798–1810). By CARLOS GUSTAVO MEJÍA CHÁVEZ. Mexico City: El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 2025. Figures. Notes. Bibliography. 624 pp. Paper, Mex$380.00.

What did the inhabitants of New Spain think of Napoleon Bonaparte? At first glance, the answer seems simple: As the man responsible for the abdication of King Charles IV and his son Ferdinand VII and the occupation of Spain, he must have been universally despised. This book offers a much more nuanced answer.

Basing himself on meticulous research in an impressive number of primary and secondary sources, Carlos Gustavo Mejía Chávez deals with Napoleon's reception in New Spain more comprehensively than previous historians have done. He makes clear that the population of New Spain was exposed to the radical principles of the French Revolution in all walks of life, not only through pamphlets, poems, and songs but also in the form of engravings, watches, and snuffboxes that conveyed a message. The same was true for Napoleon's reception, which Mejía divides into three stages. Prior to his seizure of power in 1799, Napoleon was presented in New Spain as a general who successfully contributed to the expansion of French revolutionary influence on the European battlefields. After 1799, first as consul and then as emperor, Napoleon earned himself a reputation as a good Catholic, as the man who had restored the Catholic faith in France. In addition, Napoleon was praised as a promoter of peace and the powerful opponent of the hated British. His reputation, as Mejía emphasizes, cannot be separated from the intensification in the early years of the nineteenth century of the French propaganda war against Britain, which found its expression in New Spain in recycled satirical libels, leaflets, and caricatures, as well as allegorical imagery that Napoleon used in stamps to present himself as victorious thanks to divine design. Both the *Gazeta de México* and the *Diario de México* were important vehicles for promoting a positive image of Napoleon. It is unclear, however, argues Mejía, whether the population at large shared the support for the overseas emperor, even when the French propaganda machine was running at full speed in 1806 and 1807.

Everything changed in 1808, the year in which Ferdinand VII laid claim to the Spanish throne, Ferdinand and Charles IV were deposed by Napoleon in Bayonne, and the emperor appointed his brother Joseph as King José I of Spain. Napoleon's own propaganda offensive could not counter the sudden turn in public opinion against him. Immediately after the news arrived of Ferdinand's accession to the throne, portraits and statues of Napoleon were confiscated and torn down throughout Mexico. Images of him were publicly burned, and he was portrayed, including in the *Gazeta* and the *Diario*, as a fiery tyrant who wanted to extend his power over all of Europe and perhaps America. Anti-Bonapartists, among whom clergymen were particularly prominent, now drew on a wide arsenal of epithets for Napoleon and his followers: They were labeled traitors, cruel persecutors, apostates, schismatics, and enemies of mankind and the social order. The pamphleteers did not shy away from false accusations, and the notion of a conspiracy ultimately controlled by Freemasons was widespread. One important motive for these exaggerations was the authorities' fear of an uprising inspired by Napoleon. In this context, Mejía devotes an original section to the emissaries whom the Corsican sent to the coasts of Spanish America. Although the arrival of these people is beyond doubt, an "intangible fear" of French natives arose in New Spain (p. 454). They seemed to be everywhere. Viceroy Francisco Javier de Lizana y Beaumont wrote, for example, that Napoleon had dispatched 500 emissaries to the Americas.

My only—modest—reservation about this well-conceived and well-executed book is that the author understates the degree to which anti-Bonapartist propaganda was indebted to a reservoir of conservative ideas that went back many decades. Darrin McMahon has shown that the combination of the imputation of unbelief to their adversaries, the fear of social disintegration, and the notion of a vast conspiracy was already present in mid-eighteenth-century France among representatives of what he termed the Counter-Enlightenment. After 1789, antirevolutionaries in western and central Europe varied on this theme, which culminated in works such as *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du jacobinisme* (1797–98) by the Jesuit Augustin Barruel, whose conspirational beliefs, as Mejía reveals, were influential in New Spain. The Counter-Enlightenment was thus an ideological forerunner of the anti-Bonapartism on display in New Spain in the early nineteenth century.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488067

Torn Asunder: Republican Crises and Civil Wars in the United States and Mexico, 1848–1867. By ERIKA PANI. The David J. Weber Series in the New Borderlands History. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2025. Photographs. Figures. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xiv, 336 pp. Paper, $32.95.

Erika Pani's *Torn Asunder* is a sustained assault on the artificial barrier that the historians of the United States and Mexico have erected between their respective playpens. Pani examines the causes and consequences of the devastating civil wars that both countries

experienced in the 1850s and 1860s, highlighting their similarities and connections without ever losing sight of their differences. Her approach, based on careful research on both countries, makes for fascinating reading.

Pani uncontroversially locates the origins of these civil wars in another war, the 1846–48 war of aggression that the United States waged against Mexico. The United States won that war, with drastic consequences for both countries. The vast territorial loot that the United States acquired raised unsettling questions about the forms of labor that would be used to exploit these new lands. The riches that the Industrial Revolution brought to Southern planters had encouraged them to build an identity that extolled the justice and economic efficiency of human bondage, while many Northerners believed that the new lands should be peopled and worked by free men. Meanwhile in Mexico, defeat led different sets of Mexican politicians to believe that drastic change was needed. Some sought to shake off colonial legacies, while others formulated an explicitly conservative ideology that praised those same legacies. In both countries, politics became much more fractious, emotional, and ideological, setting them on the path to civil war.

Amid debilitating civil war, Mexico's Liberals doubled down on their program of radical reform, divorcing church from state and nationalizing the accumulated wealth of Catholic institutions. Their opponents embraced a rigorous authoritarianism that amounted to military dictatorship. Ominously, some also sought foreign help, and their success meant that when the Liberals won the civil war there was only brief respite for Mexicans. European intervention in Mexican politics was only possible because Mexico's earlier tormentor, the United States, was embroiled in its own civil war. The French Intervention made a member of the Hapsburg royal family Mexico's nominal emperor, with his rule upheld by a bickering coalition of French, Austrian, Belgian, and Mexican Conservative generals, along with Mexico's clerical hierarchy, Conservative politicians, and even some Liberal politicians. Still, politics in the United States was even more of a mess, as Northern and Southern politicians sought to preserve their own shaky coalitions and mobilize the forces that decimated each other on dozens of battlefields.

Pani tells this familiar story exceptionally well, but that retelling is not the heart of her project. Pani analyzes the messier, real-world politics of the era, but what most interests her is how all these groups imagined what politics should be like. Pani attacks these questions through a particularly careful and discerning analysis of the documents produced by the leaders of each group, especially laws and constitutions. This analysis brings to light many things about the different worlds that these men wanted to create. Even constitutions that were never published, like that written by the Conservatives during the War of the Reform and that written for Maximilian's empire, prove to be revealing. Pani also points out that Mexican Liberals and the Union government outwardly revered constitutions but found them to be too impractical to follow during civil wars. During the civil wars, what mattered was the mobilizational capacity of all groups, capacity that was needed for the bloody violence of the era.

Pani is also deeply interested in the connections between events in Mexico and the United States. During their civil war against the Conservatives and their later war against

the French Intervention, the Liberals sought resources available in the United States, especially weapons, while different US envoys worked to pry territory and other concessions from the Mexicans. After the US Civil War ended, the Washington government asked France to leave Mexico, but it did so very delicately, even as US generals on the border made more bellicose gestures. Pani explores all these connections and many more very effectively.

Pani tackles complicated subjects and provides many new insights. Like every book, this one leaves some questions unanswered. Neither the Mexican conservatism embodied in Antonio López de Santa Anna's last dictatorship nor the armed movement that overthrew it focused on the place of Catholicism in Mexican life, so why did questions about the church almost immediately become the center of political conflict in Mexico? How much did Mexican Conservatives who feared the political activities of poor Mexicans embrace those impoverished Mexicans who rallied to the defense of the church and their communal lands during the War of the Reform? I ask these questions not as a critique of what Pani has done but instead in the hope that others will take them up in the future. No matter what questions about the period future historians take up, they would be well advised to begin their reading with this exceptional book.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488203

Landscaping Indigenous Mexico: The Liberal State and Capitalism in the Purépecha Highlands. By FERNANDO PÉREZ MONTESINOS. Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Series in Latin American and Latino Art and Culture. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2025. Photographs. Maps. Figures. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. x, 316 pp. Cloth, $45.00.

With *Landscaping Indigenous Mexico: The Liberal State and Capitalism in the Purépecha Highlands*, Fernando Pérez Montesinos brings the highlands of Michoacán into the scholarship on nineteenth-century agrarian history in Mexico. This milieu, sparked by Emilio Kourí's *A Pueblo Divided: Business, Property, and Community in Papantla, Mexico* (2004) and advanced by others since, insists that to understand nineteenth-century Mexico we must look beyond federal land expropriation laws and instead focus on conditions (economic, political, environmental, etc.) specific to regions. The environment of the Michoacán highlands and how humans manipulate it—what Pérez Montesinos labels "landscaping"—are at the heart of this beautifully told story. Pérez Montesinos's emphasis on humans' *longue durée* impact on the environment of the Indigenous Purépecha peoples is what sets his story apart within this well-trodden genre.

Landscaping Indigenous Mexico opens with two eloquent chapters that situate the reader in the diverse landscape of Michoacán, specifically the Juátarhu highlands in the west-central part of the state. Pérez Montesinos explains how the people of Juátarhu used their natural resources—water, maize, timber—to forge their communities, beginning with the pre-Columbian and colonial periods. By providing this deep history,

Pérez Montesinos makes clear how the deforestation that the region will experience in the 1890s, treated later in the book, represents an abrupt break from a centuries-long legacy of Purépecha peoples' gradual manipulation of their environment. Chapters 3 through 5 are about the "reparto process" and the decades that followed in Juátarhu (p. 75). In these middle chapters Pérez Montesinos shows how privatization was driven by state reparto laws and taxation policies as well as land-use customs. Some residents held onto their communal properties while others chose to privatize, since laying claim to lands prevented local interlopers from usurping them. Residents were impelled to privatize as they sought "ways to lessen looming evils," not because they felt pressure from federal officials or outside capitalist interlopers (p. 108). Volatile national politics in the 1850s followed by clashes between federal and state liberals in the 1860s and 1870s stymied disentailment. But as the national political scene stabilized in the late 1870s and 1880s, boundary conflicts increasingly broke out between and among residents, and privatization amped up. As Pérez Montesinos writes, "Land privatizations catalyzed a strengthening of local elites and, for the very first time, the formation of a destitute Purépecha underclass" (p. 130). In the state's warmer climes to the south, sugar barons usurped *comunero* lands. But in the highlands, maize kept Juátarhu's growing impoverished class afloat. Several other factors attenuated the effects of land privatization and disentailment as compared to other central Mexican regions such as Morelos, where, famously, sugar barons seized most small and middling properties.

Rather than sugar production, the tipping point in Juátarhu was rapid timber extraction spurred by railroad construction in the early 1890s. Chapters 6 and 7 outline timber-hewing processes and their regional effects. Pérez Montesinos asserts that "logging interests. . . . brought about structural ecological changes and altered the relationship comuneros had with their historic landscape" (p. 185). Pérez Montesinos's contention that to understand nineteenth-century agrarian reform in Mexico we must understand how land is used is essential. In the highlands of Michoacán, timber industrialists leased or otherwise exploited *montes*. But crucially, industrialists did not have to own lands to use them (p. 206). While this argument—that we must understand how land is used, not just how it is owned—is not particularly original, Pérez Montesinos's study of Juátarhu is another example of why regional examinations of agrarian reform are still critical for mapping out nineteenth-century Mexican history. For this reason, the primary audience for this book will be modern Mexicanists, especially those who study environmental and agrarian history.

Pérez Montesinos emphasizes how exploitative capitalism, more than liberal agrarian policies, was to blame for environmental degradation in Juátarhu. Capitalist development came later to Juátarhu than other regions, and its impetus was to extract timber to build domestic railways, not to export sugar or henequen. Nevertheless, railroad building and the laws that liberal politicos drafted to privatize more lands to expand the export economy were driven by the same goal to modernize Mexico. Extractive capitalism cannot be so neatly extricated from processes of disentailment, as Pérez Montesinos supposes. His framework of landscaping could have been more explicitly treated

in the book, especially in the middle chapters, where the book reads as more a political than an environmental history. Nevertheless, Pérez Montesinos should be commended for paying such close attention to the diverse landscapes of Michoacán and how these landscapes shaped how agrarian reform took place there.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488251

Twentieth–Twenty-First Centuries

Buñuel and Mexico: The Crisis of National Cinema. By ERNESTO R. ACEVEDO-MUÑOZ. 2nd ed. Oakland: University of California Press, 2025. Photographs. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xii, 202 pp. Paper, $34.95.

El vínculo entre México y el cineasta aragonés Luis Buñuel ha sido un tema central para la historiografía del cine mexicano. El personaje –definido como "genio" por un entusiasta Emilio García Riera– fungió como inspiración para la generación de jóvenes críticos que desde finales de los años cincuenta pugnaron por renovar una industria en crisis y abrirla a un relevo que consideraban urgente, mientras se ocupaban de moldear los cauces para pensar la historia del cine nacional. Buñuel fue interpretado como el solitario creador que mostraba el camino que debía tomar el cine mexicano: provocador, cosmopolita, comprometido consigo mismo y atractivo para la crítica europea. Por tanto "sería la figura a seguir en la búsqueda de un cine mexicano de direcciones innovadoras y originales" (p. 150). La generación intelectual de los años sesenta "abrazó su trabajo como ejemplo de lo que el 'nuevo cine' debería llegar a ser" (p. 150).

En Europa y Estados Unidos, sin embargo, Buñuel ha sido leído como el surrealista transterrado que, a pesar de México, consiguió reinstalarse como autor total en el cine francés de finales de los años sesenta. Su obra mexicana es, cuando mucho, honradamente alimenticia y apenas interesante por algunos guiños propios de sus obsesiones geniales. Ambas representaciones de Buñuel, alimentadas por él mismo en sus memorias y entrevistas postreras, desvanecen la trascendencia del cine industrial mexicano de los años cuarenta y cincuenta, y la importancia que éste tuvo para un Buñuel que, a su vez, retribuyó "con una mirada crítica, con la fascinación de un extraño que presencia una cultura exótica e incomprensible" (p. 147).

Publicado originalmente en 2003, el influyente trabajo de Ernesto Acevedo-Muñoz sobre Buñuel y el cine industrial mexicano –como demuestra esta reedición– ha participado de un creciente interés por entender los mecanismos del cine clásico mexicano y sus resonancias en el proyecto nacional, a través del análisis de su discursividad, con un énfasis en las representaciones de las relaciones de género, como han propuesto autores como Mary Kay Vaughan y Charles Ramírez Berg –revisados por Acevedo-Muñoz– o Zuzana Pick y Sergio de la Mora, quienes poco después desarrollaron sus respectivos análisis desde coordenadas afines.

Para Acevedo-Muñoz, Buñuel y su obra muestran las contradicciones entre mercados cinematográficos distintos en el mundo cambiante de la posguerra, contradicciones que Buñuel supo sortear hasta encontrar "un trampolín para regresar a la escena cinematográfica internacional y alejarse de las restricciones del mercado cinematográfico nacional" (p. 144). Aun así, no dejó del todo la escena local mexicana, en la que siguió participando a través de actividades privadas y públicas de respaldo al trabajo de renovación del cine mexicano desarrollado por sus amigos y discípulos.

La obra revisa parte de la filmografía mexicana de Buñuel –compuesta por 20 de sus 32 películas– y la analiza a partir del contexto nacional, para sostener con solvencia su hipótesis de que el cineasta español se involucró a profundidad en las discusiones mexicanas de su tiempo a través de sus películas, respondiendo también a las necesidades del público popular del cine mexicano. El análisis de Acevedo-Muñoz alimenta debates interesantes, como en el caso de su revisión de *Los olvidados*, que se apoya en las discusiones sobre la mexicanidad (álgidas en los años veinte y treinta y superadas para cuando Octavio Paz escribió su célebre ensayo recuperando las tesis de Samuel Ramos) y deja de lado otras disputas coyunturales relevantes en ese periodo de modernización traumática (como las que implicaron la sujeción del proyecto nacional a las necesidades geopolíticas de la Guerra Fría y la marginación de la izquierda de simpatía comunista, o el creciente descontento popular con el gobierno de Miguel Alemán). De igual forma, al valorar la excepcionalidad de *Los olvidados*, Acevedo-Muñoz no considera la inusual diversidad temática en el cine mexicano de 1949 y 1950, en buena medida propiciada por una brevísima apertura de los mecanismos de censura, en un proyecto nacional en pleno reacomodo, situación que favoreció a Buñuel en su incursión en el cine de arrabal o incluso a Emilio Fernández –autor que Acevedo-Muñoz considera la antítesis del aragonés– que filmó el mismo año *Víctimas del pecado*, película arrabalera que ha sido revalorada en los últimos años.

Recientemente, la discusión historiográfica sobre el cine mexicano se ha enriquecido con perspectivas que ponen en primer plano las asimetrías transnacionales y las disputas por los mercados cinematográficos (como han mostrado los trabajos recientes de Dolores Tierney y Rielle Navitski), y los intereses diversos de los públicos y los impactos de su afectividad (en trabajos como los de Ana Rosas Mantecón, Ignacio Sánchez Prado y Jaime Pensado). En ese sentido, la obra de Acevedo-Muñoz mantiene su vigencia, al aportar elementos para sopesar el impacto de las asimetrías entre la industria mexicana y las de Hollywood y Francia, que acabaron por imponerse en un mercado cada vez más uniformemente global, para revisar las transformaciones de los públicos mexicanos en los albores de los años sesenta y, asimismo, para valorar la profunda influencia de Buñuel en la obra de los cineastas mexicanos del último cuarto del siglo xx (de Arturo Ripstein a Alejandro González Iñárritu).

Buñuel and Mexico es una obra que ha crecido a veinte años de su publicación. Es vigente en su propuesta metodológica de integrar las películas mexicanas de Luis Buñuel, con su contexto específico, en el análisis del conjunto de su obra. Asimismo, sigue proponiendo ideas para discutir las formas en que el cine mexicano dialogó con el proyecto nacional, y las maneras en que otras tradiciones y miradas también participaron

en los procesos de modernización y en la superación del nacionalismo como único horizonte de expectativas.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12487955

Vigilar, castigar e imprimir: La producción de libros en la penitenciaría de Lima (1907–1961). By CARLOS AGUIRRE and WILLIAM FISHER. Trujillo: Reino de Almagro, 2025. Photographs. Figures. Appendix. Notes. 258 pp. Paper, S/79.00.

Although it was established in 1907 and continued to function until 1961, during a relatively short period, between 1913 and 1926, the printshop of Lima's penitentiary produced several of the most important works of literature of the period, including books by José María Eguren, Abraham Valdelomar, and César Vallejo. In this captivating study Carlos Aguirre and William Fisher provide a fascinating, deep archaeology of knowledge on the Lima penitentiary printshop.

Both authors draw on years of experience and finely honed scholarly tools. To Fisher's expertise in Latin American literary and publishing history, Aguirre, one of Peru's most innovative and prolific historians, adds two key strands of his own extensive research interests: the history of crime, punishment, and imprisonment (on which he has published a single-authored monograph and a seminal volume coedited with Ricardo Salvatore), and the history of books, publishing, and reading—a recent example of which is 2024's *Cinco días en Moscú: Mario Vargas Llosa y el socialismo soviético (1968)*, coauthored with the Russian scholar Kristina Buynova.

Over seven chapters, the authors bring together a dizzying range of sources (including numerous photographs) to explain how and why inmates at Lima's penitentiary produced some of the most avant-garde literary works of early twentieth-century Peru, including Vallejo's revolutionary *Trilce* (1922), widely considered "one of the most important poetry books of the twentieth century in any language" (p. 125). There were printing presses in other Latin American prisons (the one in Buenos Aires was established as early as 1877), but none produced such high-quality literary works. To be sure, the penitentiary printed all sorts of works. An appendix lists 151 books, including one in Quechua, as well as several periodicals printed between 1907 and 1961. But Aguirre and Fisher are primarily concerned with the small number of books of outstanding literary merit published between 1913 and 1926, when "the prison printing press . . . closely accompanied the process of literary, intellectual, editorial, and, to a certain extent, graphic design renewal of that era" (p. 62).

The Lima penitentiary printworks were intended "to provide work for prisoners in order to, in theory, contribute to their moral rehabilitation and at the same time generate income for the institution and its own prisoner-workers" (p. 47). Though not designed to compete with Lima's numerous other printshops, some state-owned, that made possible the important growth in periodicals and books during the early decades of the twentieth century, it is likely, the authors surmise, that the penitentiary printworks was cheaper. In

a context in which aspiring poets and writers had to produce, distribute, and sell their own works, the lower production cost may explain why Vallejo chose to have the Talleres Tipográficos de la Penitenciaría print two of his poetry books. But Aguirre and Fisher show that other factors need to be considered.

They demonstrate the key role played by Abraham Valdelomar, one of the emerging Lima literary scene's major figures. In 1913, his father became the prison's director. He was in the post for little over a year, but the connection had been made. The following year, Valdelomar had his biography of Francisca Zubiaga y Bernales, President Agustín Gamarra's wife, printed in the prison. This connection between Valdelomar and the prison printshop may suffice to explain why others in Lima's small literary circles decided to have their works printed there. But Aguirre and Fisher point to equally important factors. Authors were drawn by the quality of the books produced in the printshop and by the degree of innovation and experimentation in production, covering typography and quality of paper as well as cover design. This may have proved particularly attractive to poets experimenting with form. Additionally, authors could "be directly involved in the design and editing of the book" (p. 131). For Vallejo, who had been imprisoned in Trujillo before moving to Lima and who may therefore have had another, more personal reason to choose the prison printshop, the penitentiary offered a singular opportunity to shape his poetry books during production.

In an epilogue the authors reflect on the relative absence in their account of the prison workers who manned the printing presses and linotypes. The available sources provide limited information on who they were, though Aguirre and Fisher provide fascinating insight nonetheless on these prisoners' agency by drawing on various sources; several photographs give a sense of the environment in which they worked. It is fitting that the quality of these prisoners' work, which Vallejo and others sought out, is echoed in the production of Aguirre and Fisher's volume. From the compelling cover with its wraparound image of the prison printshop to the quality of the paper on which the text is printed, the countless illustrations, and the overall design and editorial care, this is a beautifully and professionally produced book. Reino de Almagro is one of several small presses invigorating humanities and social science publishing in Peru. Together with the authors, the publishers have produced a book that, in form as well as substance, serves as an homage to the largely anonymous prison print workers who, a hundred years ago, helped produce some of Peru's literary masterpieces.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488059

El terremoto del Cusco: Reconstrucción, utopías urbanas y Guerra Fría (1950–1953). By RAÚL ASENSIO. Estudios Americanos: Tierra Nueva. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2023. Photographs. Figures. Notes. Bibliography. 243 pp. Paper, €12.50.

Raúl Asensio's *El terremoto del Cusco* is a detailed history of the 1950 Cusco earthquake and its local and global consequences. This book joins a growing genre of Latin American

history that focuses on the history of disasters—a trend that suggests not oversaturation but the effectiveness of using disasters as a particularly fruitful way to connect several themes of history. Fortunately, Asensio continues this in *El terremoto del Cusco*.

The book's analysis is centered on an earthquake that struck Cusco on May 21, 1950. While (fortunately) not particularly deadly (the death toll was around 60), the seismic activity was incredibly damaging to the city's housing stock and many historical structures. Asensio makes a compelling case for why this earthquake became an important global focal point. First, by 1950 Cusco had emerged as an emblematic city for multiple cultural currents including *indigenismo*, Pan-Americanism, and even conservative-leaning *hispanista* cultural ties with Spain. Second, Asensio notes that the earthquake and the recovery from it occurred at a unique global moment when the post–World War II global order was in formation but not solidified, with competing political movements seeking to shape the postwar global order. These confluences of interests were also occurring at a moment of global optimism in high modernist reform. As a result, many actors viewed the earthquake as a unique moment to exert influence and to either restore or fundamentally remake Cusco and its society.

To navigate these many different narratives, the book draws on incredibly detailed archival research focused mainly on the earthquake itself until 1953, when, Asensio convincingly argues, most of the serious debates about reconstruction occurred. Asensio certainly provides the needed larger historical context, but one of the pleasures of the book is its focus on a very specific time and place. Through a detailed presentation of sources, readers gain a sense of the urgency of restoring communications following the earthquake, the tone of residents discussing plans in *cabildos abiertos*, and lobbying prior to votes in the Peruvian Congress and in the halls of United Nations (UN) offices.

Several prominent characters appear throughout the book's narrative. The *indigenista* Luis E. Valcárcel led efforts to restore Cusco to appear as it was before the earthquake with few modernist alterations, while Luis Miró Quesada Garland's *plan piloto* represented mid-twentieth-century efforts to create a modern and ordered city. Also involved were ministers of Manuel Odría's military government hoping to shore up popular support for a relatively new regime. Argentina sent humanitarian help as part of its efforts to gain legitimacy and support for Juan Perón's third-way populism during the onset of the Cold War.

Some of the most intriguing actors are those representing the new international institutions forming at the time of the earthquake. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), working with long-standing cultural figures like Albert Giesecke and Mexico's Jaime Torres Bodet, appointed the young George Kubler to guide the restoration of the city. Alongside these efforts were the development reports of Robert Hudgens, which focused on modernizing Cusco's economy through earthquake reconstruction and represented the possibility for the American International Association for Economic and Social Development—a Nelson Rockefeller–created organization—to promote development in Latin America.

Yet Asensio notes how all these often high-minded ideas ultimately had to pass through a complex local society that was prioritizing restoring their housing and businesses over high modernist plans for the future. By focusing on this, Asensio changes our

assessment of the earthquake reconstruction. The general historical consensus has largely been to judge the failure of most of the high-minded reconstruction plans, especially the failure of the Hudgens report to spur modernizing argricultural development, a lost opportunity for Cusco. Yet Asensio notes that, when viewed comparatively, the reconstruction was far from a failure and resulted in creating one of Peru's most popular urban cultural tourist centers. Asensio also illustrates how the reconstruction also fundamentally changed Cusco's local elite, as the traditional agro-industrial elite gave way to a more middle-class professional set able to take advantage of the technical nature of the reconstruction.

Interestingly, Asensio argues convincingly that—for better or for worse—Francoist Spain was perhaps the biggest winner in the entire episode. Isolated economically and politically after World War II, Spain's diplomatic and cultural institutions wisely focused on restoring Cusco's cathedral following the earthquake. This project (unlike the more abstract plans proposed by the UN and the US-backed Hudgens) was deemed a success by all. More importantly, it helped generate goodwill for Spain to join UNESCO and start a process to integrate itself back into the community of nations. Asensio also suggests that this may have begun a regrettable turning point when Latin American nations (previously quite active in UNESCO) inadvertently ceded cultural preservation leadership to Europe.

This book is a detailed and clear analysis that will be welcome reading for anyone interested in Andean history, the history of disasters, and the history of cultural preservation.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488019

Dawn Rose on a Dead Body: Armed Violence and Poppy Farming in Mexico. By ADÈLE BLAZQUEZ. Translated by H. W. RANDOLPH. California Series in Public Anthropology. Oakland: University of California Press, 2025. Photographs. Maps. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xiv, 314 pp. Paper, $29.95.

Dawn Rose on a Dead Body is a work of transforming importance, pivotal to understanding contemporary Mexican history. A French anthropologist, Adèle Blazquez after 2010 lived for nearly two years in Badiraguato, Sinaloa, famous as the center of heroin production for export and birthplace of key drug capitalists Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán Loera and Rafael Caro Quintero. And while we have endless studies of the rise of the drug economy, the power that it concentrates among a violent entrepreneurial few, and the addictions that it feeds across the US and the world, we have few close analyses of the people who worked to produce the poppies that made heroin—until fentanyl replaced poppies and displaced the producers who raised them.

Living in the municipal seat, Blazquez traveled across highlands that might seem isolated but for their role as the productive foundation of the poppy-heroin economy. The town was the seat of local governance and law enforcement, important to

everyday life yet clearly limited in effective powers. It hosted churches, small shops, saloons, restaurants, and more, pivotal to sustaining a semblance of everyday normalcy—too often violated by the violence that sustained and disputed the dynamic regional economy. Outside town, family growers struggled to protect the poppies in their fields, working to claim harvests and deliver them to buyers with labs making heroin for transnational markets. For the few, profit was sustained by violence; for the many, modest prosperity was possible—if the violence was respected and avoided.

The core contribution of the book is to reveal the complex ways that people surrounded by violence worked with family and neighbors to forge ties of trust that enabled the majority to carry on in the face of uncertain and threatening everyday conditions. They learned with whom they might talk openly, with whom they should remain circumspect, and whom they should avoid—if they could. They learned to see and not see, to share and not to share. And most did live to carry on in the face of endless threatening insecurities. Most notably, the people whom Blazquez came to know so closely were not broken. They showed adaptive strengths grounded in close families and carefully cultivated communities that made life possible in times of endless uncertainty and looming violence.

The violence essential to life and production in Badiraguato is well known. Blazquez documents in unique compassionate detail the adaptive resilience of its people, enabling life in the worst of times. That core of her work will serve historians of the early twenty-first century as an essential primary source, a firsthand account, often in the voices of everyday people, essential to understanding Mexico and Mexicans in times of challenge and change.

Simultaneously, *Dawn Rose on a Dead Body* offers an essential historical analysis of Sinaloa and Badiraguato in the half century that led to their becoming pivotal to the drug economy—and the break that came when chemical fentanyl displaced cultivated poppies in that economy. Blazquez details how the Green Revolution of the mid-twentieth century drove family maize growers off the land in rich coastal plains and left those on marginal lands in the Badiraguato uplands to face struggles that in time left them with no alternative but to migrate north—or become poppy growers in service of a rising drug economy that profited from northern addictions. She also explores how Sinaloa authorities took actions—some public, many cast in authoritarian shadows—to facilitate that transition for their own gain and political persistence.

Then, as Blazquez left Sinaloa to write the thesis that was the foundation of the book, she saw chemically made fentanyl begin to displace cultivated poppies as the basis of a new, more profitable heroin economy. She was not present to live firsthand the impacts of that change on life in Badiraguato. But while writing the book, continuing contacts made it clear that the poppy farming that had enabled families to adapt and survive as essential small growers was vanishing. Drug merchants, transporters, and violent enforcers carried on while an educated few made fentanyl in labs. Family growers became irrelevant. They might imagine a return to making sustenance—but maize (like fentanyl) now requires costly chemicals to produce. Or they might join migrant flows heading north—to face an ever less welcoming reception in a nation still consuming

anesthetizing drugs as growing numbers face displacement into lives of insecurity and marginality on both sides of the border.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488195

Anti-Catholicism in the Mexican Revolution, 1913–1940. Edited by JÜRGEN BUCHENAU and DAVID S. DALTON. Diálogos Series. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2024. Photographs. Figures. Notes. Glossary. Bibliographies. Index. xii, 284 pp. Paper, $29.95.

Published between 1973 and 1974, Jean Meyer's three-volume opus on Mexico's Cristero Rebellion (1926–29), *La Cristiada*, set the foundation for future studies of popular Catholicism as an oppositional force to state anticlericalism in the decades following the Mexican Revolution (1910–20). Historians have since approached anti-Catholicism as a top-down imposition, contrasting the organic religious practices of grassroots Catholics with the unpopular anticlerical schemes of local- and national-level political elites. Jürgen Buchenau and David S. Dalton's new multidisciplinary collection of essays complicates this 50-year-old framework. The volume is a welcome and necessary addition to the field of Mexican history, exposing readers to the prevalence of anti-Catholicism "across all social strata, from presidents to middle-class intellectuals to agrarian and labor activists" (p. 2).

This edited volume examines anti-Catholicism in government (section 1), in Mexico's feminist and prohibitionist movements (section 2), and in "the utopian and even religious discourses" (p. 11) of Marxists, scientists, and immigrant religious minorities (section 3), the last of which included US and Canadian Mormons and Mennonites. The editors define anti-Catholicism as "all beliefs and measures opposed to the worldviews, beliefs, and practices of the Catholic Church, its clergy, and its faithful" (p. 238). This is a broad definition that, according to historian Matthew Butler, leaves room for the study of different subgenres of anti-Catholic practice and ideology—specifically, irreligion (lack of faith), laicism (church-state separation), and anticlericalism (opposition to clergy).

Butler's afterword, however, warns against equating these overlapping yet distinct categories. His recent study of Mexico's schismatic national church, the Iglesia Católica Apostólica Mexicana (ICAM), speaks to such complexity, analyzing ICAM's opposition to the Roman Curia (anticlericalism) while underscoring ICAM's embrace of Indigenous Catholic traditions. At the same time, Butler points toward some of the volume's thematic and methodological lacunae, an honest and important contribution that should be taken not as criticism but as an invitation to expand the scholarly conversation by integrating new research. These categories include studies of medicine and divorce law, along with the roles of war and violence in making Catholicism unsustainable for everyday Mexicans.

At first glance, section 1 of this collection appears to counteract the editors' aims by reinscribing Meyer's paradigm of anti-Catholicism as an "elite" project. Buchenau, Sarah Osten, and Dalton respectively examine well-known figures whose misdeeds

and reputations are all too familiar in the scholarly literature: President Plutarco Elías Calles, Tabasco Governor Tomás Garrido Canabal, and anthropologist Manuel Gamio. These chapters, however, complicate popular and scholarly misconceptions of Calles as Mexico's "arch-clerophobe" (p. 21), Garrido Canabal as a radical anti-Catholic "aberration" (p. 49), and Gamio as a scientific neopositivist aligned with the state's aggressive anticlerical policies. Instead, Dalton emphasizes Gamio's moderate and "pragmatic" anti-Catholicism (p. 78), while Buchenau and Osten present meticulously researched reinterpretations of Calles and Garrido Canabal as products of their respective geographies, political formations, and lived experiences. These are certainly valuable interventions—most notably Osten's analysis of how the understudied de la Huerta rebellion (1923–24) influenced Garrido Canabal's "authoritarian innovations on the southeastern socialist model of leftist corporatism" (p. 49). Together, these studies offer much-needed contextualization in a field that has grown dominated by Catholic perspectives, the inadvertent consequence, perhaps, of public memory and the nature of the archive.

Section 2 introduces voices outside Mexico's political elite by focusing on feminist anticlericalism and revealing overlooked connections between anti-Catholic and antialcohol campaigns in Mexico City, Sonora, and Mexico's center-west, south, and southeast. These two chapters center the perspectives of prominent activists, intellectuals, and "ordinary people" (p. 127), some of whom were at "the tip of the iceberg in terms of collective action" (p. 100) wherein anti-Catholicism intersected with other national struggles. Elissa J. Rashkin examines feminist intellectuals' engagement with irreligion, anticlericalism, and anti-Catholicism as they debated feminine sexuality and women's civil rights. Gretchen Pierce analyzes the intersections between regional temperance movements and anti-Catholicism, emphasizing the latter's connections to state-sponsored campaigns devoted to defanaticization and national "improvement" (p. 138) in the realms of public health and education. Both chapters present anti-Catholicism as one response to broader issues: patriarchy and alcoholism. Although historians have previously studied these connections, Rashkin introduces readers to the contemporary relevance of their histories, and Pierce integrates regional perspectives to enhance our understanding of national movements.

Section 3 is perhaps the most compelling in initiating a dialogue between historians and scholars of art history, religious studies, and the history of science and medicine. These chapters effectively reframe anti-Catholicism as the product of conflict between competing worldviews: Catholicism, on the one hand, and science, Marxism, and competing religious denominations, on the other. Whereas Rebecca Janzen's study of Mormons and Mennonites will nestle well with research on immigration to Mexico and new studies of religious minorities in Latin America and the United States, Héctor Jaimes's analyses of anti-Catholic muralist dialectics—the teleological means by which artists like Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros attempted to supplant Catholicism with materialism—will attract scholars of philosophy, art theory, and aesthetics. Meanwhile, Ben Fallaw's study of scientistic spiritists complements Sarah Osten's chapter on Garrido Canabal's Tabasco, expanding our vision of rationalist schools to include *pláticas* designed to "scientifically explain phenomena attributed to divine forces" (p. 169).

Overall, this volume will make an excellent addition to syllabi on the Mexican Revolution, Mexican history more broadly, and the global history of anti-Catholicism. It will hopefully inspire new questions, interdisciplinary research, and fresh perspectives in a recently revitalized field.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488083

Dictatorship Across Borders: Brazil, Chile, and the South American Cold War. By MILA BURNS. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2025. Photographs. Figure. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xviii, 237 pp. Paper, $29.95.

For Latin Americanists of a certain age, their first awareness of Brazilian involvement in the September 11, 1973, coup in Chile probably came through the classic Costa-Gavras film *Missing* (1982), in which Brazilian military officers were depicted organizing the interrogation and torture of political prisoners in the National Stadium in Santiago. Scholarly confirmation came most notably decades later in Tanya Harmer's *Allende's Chile and the Inter-American Cold War* (2011). Although the complex dynamics that Harmer portrayed largely involved Chile, the United States, and Cuba, Brazil was of critical importance as well.

Now years later, journalist and professor Mila Burns has taken a quite different approach to the subject. She emphasizes Brazilian contributions to the coup, noting that Brazilian concerns regarding the possible election of Salvador Allende developed early, according to Burns, and independently of US concerns. The Brazilian government was no "pawn" (p. 9).

She draws extensively on interviews for the most valuable portions of the book. For much of the book she focuses on Brazilian exiles. Chile had long been a haven for political refugees, from Argentina's Domingo Sarmiento in the nineteenth century to Paulo Freire and Fernando Henrique Cardoso in the 1960s. Exile was, of course, a major part of the lived experience of Latin America's Cold War. Although Burns notes the various phases in the exile experience, they tend to blend together a bit in her telling. Although the exact number of Brazilians who were imprisoned and tortured following the Chilean coup is unknown, it is believed that six Brazilians were killed.

Burns embraces the recent, if not particularly widespread, characterization of the Brazilian government as a civilian-military dictatorship. Among the ways that Burns emphasizes civilian involvement in the regime is by her intriguing exploration of the role of diplomats. Here again, the emphasis is on exiles. Beginning in Uruguay, where deposed President João Goulart and his brother-in-law Leonel Brizola lived following the coup, diplomats began to spy on the enemies of the government, which led to the formation of the Brazilian Foreign Office's Intelligence Center. It is not altogether clear how the spying on Brazilian exiles led to the coup itself. Its connection to the later and infamous Operation Condor, which united South American military governments against their enemies, however, is straightforward. And the diplomats' work was

certainly valued. Antônio Cândido da Câmara Canto, Brazilian ambassador to Chile, was in 1977 honored by the Augusto Pinochet government by having a street named after him in Santiago.

Similarities between actions taken and organizations formed prior to the 1964 and 1973 coups in Brazil and Chile respectively have long been noted. The March of the Empty Pots in each country mobilized women in opposition to the Goulart and Allende regimes and alleged economic privation. An anti-Goulart organization like the Institute for Social Studies and Research, a think tank, was mirrored in the Allende years in the Federation of Chilean Industry. Many of us have long blamed these actions and organizations on the Central Intelligence Agency. According to Burns, however, the Brazilians wrote the original screenplay for the preparation of the coup in the early 1960s and oversaw the production of the sequel a decade later in Chile. In the midst of one of its periodic economic booms, the Brazilian rulers were confident in their expanding leadership role on the continent. This was reflected most obviously in the by now familiar conversation between US President Richard Nixon and Brazilian leader Emílio Garrastazu Médici, which Burns examines at length.

Even if I prefer to avoid the overuse of the word "agency," undoubtedly Brazil was acting. What does this add up to? Brazil wanted a coup, and so did the United States. The United States had employed economic pressure and provided support for many Allende opponents but on September 11, 1973, as Harmer makes clear, was not directly involved in the coup. Brazil provided active support, in the National Stadium to be sure, as well as immediate diplomatic recognition and promises of credit. The United States did not provide recognition at first but did provide the massive economic aid that undergirded political consolidation. And over time the military government adopted the market-friendly economic reforms that provided their credibility to the international financial community.

Burns has made her contribution to the history of the South American Cold War. But in the end, after all, it was the Chilean military that had acted, effectively and with extreme force. We still need to know more about the interaction between the Brazilian and Chilean militaries. The debates over September 11, 1973, will continue.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488291

Coups d'État in Cold War Latin America, 1964–1982. Edited by SEBASTIÁN CARASSAI and KEVIN COLEMAN. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025. Notes. Index. viii, 278 pp. Cloth, $120.00.

Nos estudos sobre as ditaduras instauradas na América Latina a partir dos anos 1960, há uma tradição de publicação de coletâneas sobre os diversos países em busca de uma compreensão geral. Durante muito tempo, a maior parte das contribuições veio de cientistas políticos, nem sempre dedicados à pesquisa sobre América Latina. A coletânea *Coups d'État in Cold War Latin America, 1964–1982*, organizada por Sebastián Carassai e Kevin

Coleman, reúne estudos de historiadores especializados nos respectivos países examinados, com numerosas publicações sobre o tema. Organizada em ordem cronológica de ocorrência dos golpes, a obra traz capítulos sobre Brasil (1964) por Benjamin Cowan, Bolívia (1964) por Thomas Field, Peru (1968) por Peter Klarén, Honduras (1972) por Kevin Coleman, Uruguai (1973) por Vania Markarian, Chile (1973) por Camilo Trumper, Argentina (1976) por Sebastián Carassai, El Salvador (1979) por Jeffrey Gould e Heather Vrana, e Guatemala (1982) por Virginia Garrard. Ao final, Barbara Weinstein comenta os desafios atuais da democracia, da historiografia recente sobre a América Latina e, de certa maneira, sugere uma agenda de pesquisa.

Os golpes de Estado foram examinados, em artigos originais, a partir de questões propostas pelos organizadores: Quando uma transferência de poder é definida como golpe de Estado? Quais os objetivos, explícitos e implícitos, de derrubar um regime? Qual o papel do governo dos Estados Unidos? Qual o papel dos atores políticos locais? Quais as alternativas consideradas pelos diferentes setores em cada país? Quais tipos de resistência os protagonistas dos golpes enfrentaram? A coesão entre os sucessivos capítulos indica que as questões explicitadas pelos organizadores são comuns às abordagens dos pesquisadores convidados, consistindo em expressão de uma historiografia recente sobre a América Latina no século XX. Em comum, os historiadores investigam as percepções e a agência dos diferentes agentes políticos relevantes para a compreensão da correlação de forças em cada país. Os golpes de Estado são considerados como eventos, em suas contingências e particularidades, e como uma decorrência de processos históricos então em curso, especialmente desde o final da Segunda Guerra Mundial.

Como Weinstein destaca, os historiadores devem compreender o valor de investigar a especificidade de cada experiência, assim como procurar tecer generalizações e observar as relações entre ambas. O conjunto dos estudos mostra como os sucessivos golpes modificam o cenário político nos países vizinhos e indica a existência de um padrão. A partir de 1945, nos diferentes países da região, houve uma mobilização social no sentido de construir sistemas democráticos: expansão do eleitorado, formação de partidos políticos nacionais, liberdade de organização de sindicatos de trabalhadores e ascensão ao poder de lideranças nacionalistas e reformistas por meio do voto. Por toda a América Latina, a reação interna não tardou, e tornou-se comum o combate ao reformismo a partir de argumentos baseados na Guerra Fria, com a identificação de políticos reformistas como "subversivos". Apesar de Cowan enfatizar o peso da questão moral na mobilização anterior ao golpe civil-militar de 1964, vários estudos mostram a reação mais geral de políticos e militares de direita à expansão dos reformistas. No Brasil, em 1962, o partido do então presidente João Goulart, o Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro, se tornou o segundo maior partido no Congresso Nacional.

A coletânea, portanto, contribui para a historiografia das ditaduras dos anos 1960 a 1980 e também para o estudo das democracias no período anterior. Todos os autores enfatizam a centralidade das disputas políticas internas a cada país na motivação dos golpes. É uma perspectiva muito distinta de explicações baseadas em determinismos ou estereótipos de qualquer ordem, que, em geral, reiteravam a descrença nas experiências democráticas na América Latina. Para Weinstein, os estudos destacam que, por vezes, os

golpes foram resultado não de fragilidade democrática, mas de "too much democracy" (pp. 227-28), ou seja, uma expansão democrática maior do que as direitas latino-americanas pretendiam tolerar. Ainda há muitos temas relevantes no horizonte, e Weinstein levanta ao menos duas questões interessantes que podem ser consideradas para uma agenda de pesquisa. Em primeiro lugar, a nova historiografia direciona o foco para a participação dos civis, o que obscurece o papel crucial dos militares ("men with guns" [pp. 222-23]), condição *sine qua non* em todos os golpes de Estado. Em segundo lugar, é preciso incorporar na investigação do autoritarismo, não como traço cultural, mas como práticas na ação política, as questões de classe, gênero e raça.

Desde os anos 1980, início do processo de redemocratização dos países da região do Cone Sul, é notável o investimento em estudos críticos da política externa norte-americana para a América Latina. No mesmo período, houve significativa expansão da formação em nível de pós-graduação na área de História nas universidades sediadas na América Latina e nos Estados Unidos, nas quais a maioria dos autores desenvolveu suas teses de doutorado e vários atuam como docentes. De certa maneira, a coletânea se destaca como demonstração da inadequação do uso da metáfora da marionete ("puppet") nos estudos sobre América Latina. No século XX, em textos acadêmicos, no senso comum e muitas vezes na imprensa por meio de cartuns, as relações entre os Estados Unidos e a América Latina foram interpretadas como dominação por interpostas pessoas: os bonecos ("puppets") que agem conforme a orientação do manipulador. A metáfora da marionete desqualifica cada país como um todo: se uma marionete pode comandar uma nação, somos todos incapazes. A metáfora da marionete também minimiza a dimensão da violência na política internacional, seja o reconhecido uso das forças armadas ou o apoio a um Estado com poder bélico muito superior. Se olhamos para os políticos e militares à frente dos golpes de Estado como marionetes de governos dos Estados Unidos, ignoramos a agenda e a capacidade de agência das direitas latino-americanas. Na presente coletânea, os autores tomam o fenômeno do apoio de governos dos Estados Unidos nas diferentes conjunturas, de fato, como objeto de pesquisa e mostram que, na maioria dos casos, houve ações coordenadas com militares e políticos em cada país. Em sentido amplo, é uma excelente contribuição para o estudo do desafio político e metodológico do princípio da autodeterminação dos povos.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12487947

The Long Shadow of Extraction: The Origins of Indigenous Autonomy Demands.
By CHRISTOPHER L. CARTER. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2025.
Maps. Figures. Tables. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xvii, 266 pp.
Paper, $29.95.

Analysts have long noted major variations among Latin America's Indigenous movements and state responses to them. Differences are obvious, for example, in the strength of Bolivian versus Peruvian Indigenous organizations. Demands also vary. Only a minority

of Indigenous peoples pursue full institutional autonomy. Some movements seek more limited versions of autonomy. Some mobilize mostly for cultural recognition. Some make no recognizably "ethnic" demands at all.

Christopher L. Carter's *The Long Shadow of Extraction* seeks to explain this "demand-side" variation through case studies in Peru's Cusco department and the Bolivian departments of La Paz, Oruro, Potosí, and Cochabamba. Carter divides movements into those seeking "autonomy," "assimilation," and "integration." Autonomy might include protection of communal lands and recognition of Indigenous governance structures. An assimilation agenda entails mobilization based on shared class position, with Indigenous identities and institutions playing little visible role. Integration is a hybrid version involving both class-based organizing and Indigenous-specific demands for things like bilingual education or communal land restitution.

Carter argues that this variation stems from differing historical experiences of labor exploitation, particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This is the extraction to which the book's title refers. Communities that were subjected to state conscription for infrastructural projects, such as the Augusto Leguía regime's infamous roadbuilding in 1920s Peru, tended to pursue autonomy. Because state conscription usually bypassed Indigenous community leaders, those leaders were at the forefront of communal resistance. They helped channel Indigenous anger into the strengthening of community institutions and sometimes interregional Indigenous networks like the *caciques apoderados* in Bolivia. State conscription also left enduring collective memories that fed the desire for autonomy. In these ways the state "unintentionally sowed the seeds of future ethnic mobilization," Carter argues (p. 167).

By contrast, Indigenous communities that suffered primarily at the hands of private landowners tended to forge class-based alliances with non-Indigenous organizations. Cochabamba is the clearest example of this "assimilation." The processes of hacienda expansion, communal dispossession, and labor subordination began earlier in Cochabamba than elsewhere. That meant that by the early twentieth century Indigenous struggles focused more on labor rights than on communal ownership and governance. Another key difference was the role of Indigenous leaders. Unlike later state officials, hacendados often co-opted leaders, which helps explain why the rank and file often sought outside alliances. When not accompanied by strong investment in communal institutions, those alliances tended to further erode Indigenous identity. I would only note that the erosion is often less complete than assumed; Cochabamba's "peasant" unions still conduct meetings in Quechua, for example.

Indigenous demands for "integration" reflect local histories of both state conscription and private exploitation, usually in that chronological order. In these places movements came to prioritize both Indigenous collective rights and interethnic alliances against rural elites. Indigenous activists infused those alliances with Indigenous demands rather than being drowned out by mestizo leftists or populists. Carter's examples include La Paz, Oruro, and southern Potosí and the capital province within Cusco department.

The infrequency of integration demands in the rest of Cusco, and most of Peru generally, marks a major difference between the two countries. Peru's Indigenous peoples

have typically mobilized "through either unions *or* ethnic organizations," not both (p. 194; emphasis in original). Among the likely explanations for this difference are Leguía's repression of the interethnic Left in the 1920s, the Peruvian state's efforts to co-opt rather than crush Indigenous identity, and the terror and disarticulation that accompanied the insurgency and state repression of the 1980s. Nonetheless, Carter notes that the relative lack of interethnic or interregional collaboration has not precluded important victories at the community level, such as recognition of communal autonomy and land titles. This is an important qualification to the standard picture of a weak Indigenous movement in Peru.

The book's conclusions are based on a truly impressive mixed-methods approach. To establish his dependent variable, Indigenous demands, Carter surveyed over 1,000 Indigenous Bolivians from all nine departments and over 300 Indigenous leaders in Peru, supplemented by around 70 interviews (unfortunately he does not recount how he made all those contacts). The historical data for his independent variable is drawn from a wealth of archival and secondary sources. The resulting dataset allows for regression analyses that yield strong quantitative evidence for his hypotheses. Qualitative evidence supports his posited mechanisms.

Observers of Bolivia and Peru have often remarked on the variations that Carter identifies, but no one has investigated their roots with such rigor. Few if any case studies of Indigenous movements are so systematic. *The Long Shadow of Extraction* will be essential for anyone looking to understand Indigenous movements and Andean history, and its methodology should be helpful to future researchers.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488115

Conflict and Correspondence: Belonging and Urban Community in Guadalajara, Mexico, 1939–1947. By JASON H. DORMADY. Confluencias. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2025. Photographs. Maps. Figures. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xiii, 247 pp. Paper, $30.00.

While the historiography of Mexican and Latin American cities has consolidated in recent years, the need for a multidisciplinary perspective and for differentiating the Latin American urban experience from that of other cultural geographies has been repeatedly emphasized. Despite work defending the unique nature of Mexican or Latin American urbanization, the interplay between the factors internal and external to the city that shape and define it and its historical nature remains unresolved. The need to address this methodological challenge is even greater when studying urban life in periods when the city's physical, economic, and sociocultural boundaries begin to blur due to overpopulation and the consequent metropolization of nearby spaces, territories, and cultural practices.

Faced with these challenges, it is advisable to consider the urban not as an analytical term but rather as a process, an approach that allows us to transcend the morphological, territorial, and locational emphases in previous studies of the city and that also opens our

analyses to the factors that in their uniqueness and confluence configure and energize urban societies. It has been a decade since Benjamin Fraser called for combining urban studies with cultural studies to avoid despatialized representations, in the case of cultural studies, and the subordination of representations to the city's materiality, in the case of urban studies.

It is in this context that *Conflict and Correspondence* takes up an interdisciplinary methodology incorporating several historiographical approaches to understand the sociocultural phenomena associated with Guadalajara's accelerated and chaotic transformation between 1939 and 1947, a moment of urban modernization, mass migration, and postrevolutionary conflict. Jason Dormady seeks to demonstrate that a sense of belonging arises in response to specific material conditions.

Among the historiographical currents incorporated by Dormady are Latin American urban history, studies on state building and citizenship from below, the history of urban planning, gender studies, and the social history of everyday life. Studies using these approaches have notably shifted from formal political history to focus on everyday agency, lived spaces, and intersectionality. They rely on the extensive use of municipal archives, petitions, correspondence, court records, and oral history to recover subaltern voices and everyday negotiation practices at microhistorical, local, or intermediate scales—neighborhoods, markets, parishes, domestic units—and thus visualize and interpret urban space as a producer of social relations articulated along axes of inequality based on gender, class, ethnicity, age, and religion. Such approaches also allow for the study of sensory practices (noise, smells, lighting, etc.).

Through a meticulous analysis of petitions and correspondence addressed to the municipal government of Guadalajara, Dormady explores how residents of diverse social backgrounds, genders, and religious affiliations negotiated their sense of belonging amid the city's accelerated transformations, which generated moral, religious, and urban disputes. Each chapter explores the variety of experiences of place and urban space. Instead of identity or formal citizenship, Dormady focuses on belonging as a central category to explain how such disputes fostered not social fragmentation but community cohesion.

Dormady empirically and inductively constructs the sense of belonging, which he considers a lived, conflicted, and negotiated experience, by searching in citizens' correspondence for those sensory experiences, symbols, rituals, language, traditions, and shared practices with which the people of Guadalajara—including women, migrants, and marginalized groups—were linked to their social, material, and cultural environment. The systematic use of thousands of citizen petitions allows Dormady to recover the multiple voices of actors sunk in historiographical oblivion and to reconstruct the microhistorical fabric of urban life. In examining how gender, class, and religion shape differentiated experiences of belonging, especially for women property owners, Dormady provides historical examples of practical intersectionality and integrates into his analysis sensory experiences and moral dimensions to show how everyday disputes over space and coexistence shaped community imaginaries while anchoring belonging in the body and the everyday.

However, while Dormady adds depths to his work by focusing on a short period, this also prevents him from tracing longer-term transformations in Guadalajara's urban and

social dynamics. Furthermore, the sources used have a class bias that Dormady does not sufficiently consider, since those with the cultural resources and motivation to write and demand that the authorities address their concerns were only a segment of the city and did not represent the entire citizenry. Likewise, although Dormady is aware of this risk, the abundance of themes in the book, which reflect the dynamism of everyday life—from street lighting to morality, female property ownership, and religious conflicts—sometimes blurs the central storyline and leaves the impression of a collection of case studies rather than an integrated narrative.

Despite these limitations, *Conflict and Correspondence* is a rigorously documented work, original in its approach and subject matter and innovative in its methodology, that shows us how belonging is constructed not despite conflict but through it, and that civic writing was the fundamental vehicle for negotiation, agency, and community building among diverse actors.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488011

The Holocaust and Latin America: Migration, Resettlement and Memory. Edited by DANIELA GLEIZER, EMMANUEL KAHAN, and YAEL SIMAN. The Holocaust and Its Contexts. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2025. Photographs. Notes. Bibliographies. Index. xxiii, 368 pp. Cloth, $159.99.

Spanning ten countries, this is as strong a starting point as any for those interested in this topic. Several chapters, including Sandra Gruner-Domić's "Colonisation, Refuge, and Nationalism: Bolivia and Its Jewish Migration," represent the best short overviews of what we know on migration, resettlement, and related Latin American government policies. Book objectives include globalizing Holocaust studies and redressing scant attention in the scholarly literatures to Shoah refugees. Some chapters reflect new research and analysis in these areas. But while each of the above goals is met, each has been previously addressed (sometimes by the same writers featured in this volume). Much of the book, then, reproduces what we know. The editors also hope to understand Holocaust memory beyond the "ghetto" (p. 6)—that is, outside Jewish communities in public discourse, education, and government policy, and as a "central conceptual and programme-oriented referent" to validate the "demands of victims and civil society for political recognition of their grievances and traumatic pasts" (p. 7). Here the volume is at its shakiest. Authors often wade into complex national and transnational political developments that have been well worn by historians into formal narrative grooves. Analytical nuance and depth are sometimes missing.

Jeffrey Lesser's superb chapter, "Stereotypes as Resistance: Jews and the Fight Against Victimisation in Brazil, 1930–1945," asks and answers tough questions. The writing is concise, compelling, original, and analytically subversive. Lesser is the only author to use consistently the term "Shoah," not "Holocaust," itself a forceful questioning of memory, meaning, and ideology in scholarly literatures and popular cultures. Looking back on his own work and that of others, he wonders what might be

worth probing in a new light. How did 10,000 Jews legally enter Brazil despite anti-semitic government strictures to block that immigration? What is the relevance of Jewish Holocaust refugees to the 2018 election of Jair Bolsonaro to the presidency? Is it possible that Jewish organization leaders "reformulated" racist tropes of Jewish power "from negative to positive" (p. 33), leaving aside the Jews-as-victims narrative to promote the arrival of as many Jewish refugees as possible? Did a ban on Jewish immigration produce unintended negative consequences for the 1930s presidency of Getúlio Vargas? Lesser asks and answers each of these questions effectively.

In "Itineraries of an Exemplary Memory: Colombia and the Holocaust," Lorena Cardona González's reflection on how some Colombians linked Primo Levi's Holocaust suffering to their own plight is fascinating but leaves unanswered how widely Levi's testimonial and relevant journalistic commentaries circulated. Oliver Kühschelm and Pablo Rudich provide a powerful analysis of how refugees in Uruguay rethought their understanding of *Heimat* as many returned to Austria after the war. Their chapter, "Remigration from Montevideo to Vienna: A Transgenerational and Transnational Perspective on *Heimat*," is the strongest in the collection on emotion and sentiment among Jewish refugees, and the ambivalence of many on what the idea of a homeland meant. Some chapters show less curiosity about larger political, ideological, and cultural problems. "The Diverse Uses of the Holocaust in Public Debates in Argentina" by Emmanuel Kahan and Wanda Wechsler does not address a key heated debate at issue in Shoah remembrance and its larger political relevance—whether the killing of 15,000 to 30,000 people during Argentina's last period of military rule marks a "genocide." Moreover, they take at face value dubious early 1980s assertions by the most famous victim of military violence, the journalist Jacobo Timerman, that laid the groundwork for the long-standing false equivalence of Nazi Germany to Argentine military rule. The authors ignore important analyses of Timerman that call into question his views (for example, Graciela Mochkofsky's *Timerman: El periodista que quiso ser parte del poder (1923–1999)* [2004]), why Israelis vilified Timerman in the 1980s, and his irrelevance in 1980s Argentine media culture. While the chapter touches on larger political connections between Holocaust remembrance and the politics of the moment, it goes only surface deep in relating the Shoah to dramatic political shifts in the past 40 years, including the tortuous and incomplete path to the prosecution of perpetrators of the 1994 bombing of the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina building that killed 85 people.

In "Final Remarks and Future Research" the editors assert that the book "offers a 'history from below'" (p. 353). There are tangential links in the volume between Holocaust survivors and larger class struggles in Latin America. One example is that of Israel Lapciuc, who survived the Nazi occupation of Romania only to have his father kidnapped in Colombia in 1975. Here as elsewhere, the link to class is tenuous; not every family could immediately decamp to Miami, as did the Lapciucs, for fear of ongoing civil war violence in Colombia.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12487979

The Fate of the Americas: The Cuban Missile Crisis and the Hemispheric Cold War. By RENATA KELLER. Interconnections: The Global Twentieth Century. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2025. Photographs. Map. Figures. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xviii, 314 pp. Paper, $29.95.

When I was a graduate student preparing to undertake archival research in Moscow to explore the history of Soviet–Latin American relations, my adviser asked me which countries I was planning to focus on. "Probably not as much on Cuba," I answered, "since that's the one that's been written about the most." At the time I remember thinking that there couldn't possibly be more to say about the Cuban missile crisis—one of the best-documented events in history. As I quickly discovered, however, there was plenty more to say, and Renata Keller has made a profound contribution to the field with her wide-ranging examination of the regional response to the crisis. In *The Fate of the Americas*, she skillfully weaves narratives that have typically been treated separately. The English-language scholarship tends to focus on bilateral relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, though excellent work has appeared on the Soviet-Cuban relationship and on the diplomatic initiatives of Brazil and the United Nations. However, prior to now, there has been no meaningful attempt to place the crisis in a wider regional context, apart from Keller's earlier *Diplomatic History* article, "The Latin American Missile Crisis" (2015), and some primary source collections from the Cold War International History Project.

Centering on the themes of security, sovereignty, and solidarity, Keller toggles back and forth from examining the responses and reactions of Latin American governments and publics. In order to impose discipline on what would otherwise be an unmanageable task, she has scoped the work by choosing case studies of various countries that most reflected certain patterns. Though Latin American leaders generally prioritized the nonintervention principle in international relations, the immediate danger posed by the missiles in Cuba elevated security over sovereignty, and the Organization of American States (OAS) demonstrated that it could act quickly and effectively when Washington's threat perceptions were widely shared. Keller also sheds light on the interaction between the OAS and the United Nations, demonstrating that "the two international organizations rose to the occasion and served their foundational purpose of using diplomacy and strength in numbers to help resolve international conflicts" (p. 78).

Building on the most cutting-edge scholarship and drawing on regional news media sources and numerous archival collections in the United States, Argentina, Chile, and Bolivia, Keller provides a compelling view of the origins and consequences of the missile crisis from a hemispheric standpoint. Her analysis of underlying causes sets the book apart from more standard accounts that emphasize proximate causes. For Keller, we must trace the roots of the crisis back to the Cuban Revolution and the history of contentious relations between the United States and Cuba. Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolutionaries were reacting against a long history of US political, military, and economic exploitation of the island, and here Keller joins scholars like Tanya Harmer in examining hemispheric responses to the Cuban Revolution. These responses reflected the different

political calculations of the region's dictators and democrats. Indeed, the peaceful outcome of the missile crisis was unacceptable to those who wished to see Castro removed from power once and for all.

Given the centrality of the concepts of sovereignty, security, and solidarity, Keller might have done more theoretical analysis to examine the political implications of these values and the various ways in which they have been constructed and deployed in service of political and military objectives. The United States, for instance, used the term "hemispheric solidarity" to enforce US foreign policies that often assumed an antidemocratic character, such as in the 1954 Central Intelligence Agency–supported overthrow of Guatemala's second democratically elected president, Jacobo Arbenz. The sovereignty principle has likewise been manipulated by both despotic rulers wishing to remain in power and US policymakers aiming to remove them. Security, furthermore, was often viewed very differently from Washington, obsessed with extrahemispheric threats from the Soviets and Chinese, and from Latin American capitals, where influential theorists focused on underlying causes of economic underdevelopment and widespread poverty and inequality. Indeed, one of the fundamental disconnects between the United States and most Latin American governments in approaching the OAS was that Washington attempted to use it as an instrument to achieve its security objectives, whereas Latin Americans tended to focus more on sociopolitical and economic objectives.

That being said, Keller has done an enormous service to the field and to the US public with a regional analysis that is fresh, timely, and deeply rooted in archival research while still being a genuine pleasure to read. One is tempted to hope that the book will gain a wider readership among national security professionals and policymakers, as there are many important lessons here for the present.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488211

Retrato del Mezquital: Antonio Rodríguez y la imagen del Otomí en la modernización del estado mexicano a mediados del siglo XX. By HAYDEÉ LÓPEZ HERNÁNDEZ. Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2023. Photographs. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. 339 pp. Paper, Mex$700.00.

Haydeé López Hernández stumbled on a series of large photographic prints stacked in storage at Mexico's Museo Nacional de Antropología, once displayed in the ethnographic galleries but removed during renovations. Her investigation into these objects led to the discovery of a forgotten photographic archive absent from the institution's historical records.

Within this collection, she identified 902 prints in a folder under the title "Otomíes." Drawing on her previous research on postrevolutionary *indigenismo* and its legacies in the Mezquital Valley, López Hernández recognized the work of Antonio Rodríguez, one of the pseudonyms used by Francisco de Paula Oliveira, a Portuguese communist, art critic, and journalist who arrived in Mexico in 1939. Rodríguez published photographs and essays in

cultural magazines and newspapers, and López Hernández argues convincingly that these interventions shaped a racialized, Dantean image of the Mezquital as a region marked by drought, deprivation, and poverty. This perspective was reinforced by his novel *La nube estéril: Drama del Mezquital* (1952; The barren cloud: Drama of the Mezquital), a text that remains in print and continues to be adapted in various genres and formats, reinforcing deeply racialized stereotypes.

Retrato del Mezquital is the product of López Hernández's sustained archival and field research, encompassing letters, institutional and personal records, and visits to the towns of Naxthey and Taxhié, where many of Rodríguez's images were taken. The book is far from a conventional biography; it is a rare example of scholarship that combines empirical rigor with narrative appeal, often reading like a detective story.

Central to this achievement is the author's reflexive methodology. By situating her own trajectory as a researcher within the analysis, López Hernández foregrounds the contingent questions and surprising discoveries that shaped her investigation. Rather than detracting from the argument, this reflexivity renders the book at once a work of history, ethnography, and literary analysis, as well as an experimental inquiry into the uses of images for historical research on Mexican indigenismo.

The book is organized into four chapters that follow Rodríguez's intellectual and professional itinerary. In the first, "Trascendencia de una imagen" (Transcendence of an image), López Hernández explores his journalistic output and *La nube estéril* as a hybrid of fiction and reportage that circulated as historical truth. Together, these texts and images constituted a mirror through which even the region's inhabitants came to view themselves.

Chapter 2, "Viaje al infierno" (Journey to hell), reconstructs Rodríguez's connections with the artistic and intellectual circles active in 1940s and 1950s Mexico. López Hernández demonstrates how the recurring depiction of desolation and scarcity served propagandistic purposes, legitimating state intervention via infrastructure building that expanded governmental control over the Mezquital's territory.

In "Testimonos ocultos" (Hidden testimonies), the author offers a detailed analysis of Rodríguez's photographic corpus, contrasting published images with dozens that remained unpublished. This comparison exposes stark divergences: Published photographs depicted emaciated figures trying to escape barren landscapes, while the unpublished archive revealed subjects posing smiling for the camera amid signs of a place altered by development projects run by the state and other organizations—electric poles, roads, brick houses, doctors, and teachers. These discrepancies underscore the selective curatorial work that underpinned Rodríguez's representations and highlight how visual evidence was mobilized to construct particular narratives of poverty and underdevelopment.

The final chapter, "Propaganda," situates Rodríguez's oeuvre within broader state strategies that turned the Mezquital into a laboratory for developmentalist policies promoting health, education, agriculture, industry, and tourism. López Hernández also notes that Rodríguez's images contributed to the ideological framing of another major infrastructure project: the diversion of Mexico City's sewage to irrigate the Mezquital

fields, returning the capital's waste to its residents in the form of foodstuffs and embedding Rodríguez's imagery in long-term processes of environmental and political reconfiguration.

The epilogue reflects on the enduring effects of Rodríguez's visual production. López Hernández underscores that only a few years after his images circulated, another depiction of poverty—the Spanish translation of Oscar Lewis's *The Children of Sánchez: Autobiography of a Mexican Family* (1961)—was censored by the Mexican state, illustrating the fraught politics of representation in postrevolutionary Mexico. *Retrato del Mezquital* closes the analytical circle: Beginning with forgotten prints in museum storage, it demonstrates how the postrevolutionary state mobilized images of Indigenous spaces and bodies as technologies of power, justifying interventions that were often violent.

The book is at the same time a curatorial intervention. It insists that research on visual culture requires treating images not merely as illustrations but as arguments in their own right. This principle is reflected in the book's design, which incorporates large, high-quality reproductions to be appreciated both individually and as a corpus. The inclusion of four appendixes—facsimiles of Rodríguez's reports and publications, alongside transcriptions of historical and journalistic documents—further enhances the work's documentary value.

In sum, *Retrato del Mezquital* is not only a study of Rodríguez but also a critical contribution to the historiography of Mexican indigenismo and the politics of visual culture. It demonstrates how photography, literature, and state discourses intersected to produce enduring stereotypes of Indigenous life while simultaneously legitimating developmentalist projects. The book's originality lies in its methodological integration of archival research, fieldwork, and reflexivity, as well as in its insistence on analyzing images as constitutive historical evidence. It offers an invitation to engage a wide-ranging conversation on the making and circulation of images in Mexico and beyond.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488099

A Wide Net of Solidarity: Antiracism and Anti-Imperialism from the Americas to the Globe. By ANNE GARLAND MAHLER. Radical Américas. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2025. Photographs. Figures. Notes. Bibliography. Index. x, 366 pp. Paper, $28.95.

Within a growing body of scholarship on transnational radicalism, Latin American anti-imperialist movements of the 1920s and 1930s have until recently been underrepresented. Anne Garland Mahler's new book aims to redress that balance and, in the process, to shift "our understanding of interwar Latin American intellectual history" (p. 11). Arguing that radicals from the region were more connected to global anticolonial currents than is often supposed, Mahler highlights their prescient framing of issues that remain urgent concerns.

The book focuses on the Liga Anti-imperialista de las Américas (LADLA), which quickly developed into a region-spanning network with sections in 14 countries after its

founding in Mexico City in 1925. Formed under the auspices of the Comintern and closely connected to local Communist parties, it had a wider ideological appeal and spread of members. Across seven chapters, Mahler foregrounds LADLA's relatively decentralized nature and ideological capaciousness, and its interwoven critiques of capitalism, imperialism, and racism. For Mahler, this "highly influential, but undertheorized, movement" has been unjustly neglected (p. 4).

This is the first book-length study in English to address LADLA's cultural impacts. It builds on the work of Spanish-language scholars such as Daniel Kersffeld—author of the only history of LADLA to date—the late Ricardo Melgar Bao, Sandra Pujals, and Sebastián Rivera Mir, as well as on contributions by Víctor and Lazar Jeifets and many others. While previous works are mostly concerned with LADLA's political history, Mahler is more interested in its conceptual and aesthetic implications. Each chapter revolves principally around a particular person or event, combining discussions of LADLA's ideological evolution with close readings of images or literary works.

The book's first part opens with a chapter devoted to the "relational aesthetics" of the Mexico City–based photographer Tina Modotti, who for Mahler epitomizes LADLA's political vision. Mahler then moves to the 1927 Congress Against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism in Brussels. Although this event is widely discussed in literature on Asian and African anticolonialisms, the participation of Latin American radicals is less frequently emphasized; yet for Mahler it exemplifies what she calls LADLA's "hemispheric globalism." Subsequent chapters follow the trajectories of Sandalio Junco, a Black Cuban trade unionist who played a prominent role in Comintern debates on race at the end of the 1920s, and Regino Pedroso, an Afro-Chinese-Cuban poet whose work Mahler sees as emblematic of LADLA's approach to the overlapping oppressions of race and class.

The second part of the book deals critically with the limitations and contradictions of LADLA's politics. Mahler examines the case of James Sager / Jaimes Nevares, a Boston-born Jewish activist who posed as a Puerto Rican when organizing LADLA's San Juan section—a troubling case of "ethnic impersonation," in Mahler's view. She then turns to LADLA's most successful initiative, the "Hands Off Nicaragua" campaign of the late 1920s, known by the acronym MAFUENIC. Organized to spark solidarity with Augusto Sandino's resistance to the US occupation of his country, MAFUENIC rested on an idealized projection of a hero figure that Mahler terms "the Sandino fantasy." The book concludes with a chapter on the afterlives of LADLA in social realist narratives of the 1930s such as Carmen Lyra's story collection *Bananos y hombres* (1931) and Ramón Marrero Aristy's novel *Over* (1939).

Mahler draws on a varied and geographically dispersed source base, and she makes many astute connections between the problems that LADLA was grappling with and those confronting antiracist and anti-imperialist movements in the present. At times, however, her use of present-day concepts and terms creates a sense of anachronism that historians may find jarring. For example, Mahler describes LADLA as being "focus[ed] on Indigenous communities" (p. 13), but she has inferred these communities' Indigenous identifications retroactively and in the process sidestepped the historically constituted and relational nature of Indigeneity that is such a central feature of scholarship on the

subject in Latin America. There are other examples of interpretive overreach, as when Mahler stakes a key part of her argument about Tina Modotti's political formation on a mistaken claim to have identified her in a 1925 photograph of Mexican Communist Party members (p. 50).

More significant, however, are Mahler's efforts to separate LADLA from the Communist movement. While LADLA was certainly ideologically broader than Communist parties, it was created by Communists precisely to that end, bringing together a range of organizations as part of the "united front" strategy of the mid-1920s. When that strategy changed in 1928, as the Comintern shifted to its "class against class" approach, LADLA's broader alliances crumbled, leaving only an embattled Communist core. This context matters because much of Mahler's sympathy with LADLA and her argument for its present-day relevance rest on similarities that she finds with "contemporary horizontal and anti-authoritarian social movements" (p. 204). Yet both LADLA's strengths and its weaknesses derived directly from the vertical organizations of which it was composed, especially the Communist movement; it was strategic rifts between and within these that ultimately decided its fate. While the ebbs and flows of these crucial tides often slip through her net, Mahler's book nonetheless provides insightful analyses of their cultural repercussions.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488123

The Last Door: A History of Torture in Mexico's War Against Subversives. By GLADYS I. MCCORMICK. Violence in Latin American History. Oakland: University of California Press, 2025. Photographs. Maps. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xviii, 276 pp. Paper, $29.95.

In contrast to other domestic conflicts in Latin America during the Cold War, English-language scholarship on the Mexican Dirty War (1960s–1980s) is scarce. Thus, it is not surprising that Gladys I. McCormick's book represents the first English-language study on the history of torture in the context of the counterinsurgency campaigns of those years. The author conducted extensive research in the Secretariat of the Interior's archives—especially the Federal Security Directorate (DFS)—stored at the Archivo General de la Nación, and she has examined most of the available Spanish-language literature. Between 2002 and 2024, the DFS archives underwent an odd trajectory of selective censorship, partial reclassification, and full release, with substantial limitations on consulting files about individuals who experienced gross human rights abuses, like torture, forced disappearance, and extrajudicial executions.

McCormick overcame those challenges by prioritizing the interviews with survivors of state terror. Each of her 50 interviewees entered "the last door," a metaphor that one of them used "to describe the sensation of crossing the mental threshold of intolerable pain, the type of pain that annihilates the sense of self and forever destroys a person" (p. 107). Those voices are heard throughout the book, representing one of its most

valuable contributions. However, McCormick did not seek to interview torturers. That is a limitation that most experts on the Mexican Dirty War must grapple with, given the difficulties in tracing former personnel who worked for the national security agencies. Also, interviewing perpetrators who might have tortured babies with a cattle prod poses a different type of challenge—one that a prosecutor should face instead of a civilian.

One of the main arguments of the book is that while Mexico's torture program had foreign input, it was a profoundly domestic program, in which police and military agencies developed their own torture techniques to both extract information and punish the detainees. Because of the wealth of sources, McCormick did not escape the temptation to tell a comprehensive story of Mexico's Dirty War at the national level. Thus, the book does not delve into the logistical aspects of torture, like the funding for the torture program, the purchasing of torture instruments, the expansion of police, military, and carceral facilities for torturing thousands of individuals, and the specific training of Mexican agents in the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, and other countries. Instead, the author presents an overview of counterinsurgency in both urban and rural areas and the role of torture in the success of the ruling party's agenda of monopolizing power by crushing all forms of dissent and preventing the expansion of armed resistance. Also, because of the general character of her study, McCormick does not look at the evolution of the torture methodology *sexenio* by *sexenio*, which downplays the fact that state agents were in a continuous process of trial and error to perfect the terror circuits of the clandestine prisons, the torture chambers, and the machinery for the elimination of the so-called disappeared detainees.

The book is divided into six chapters that describe the victims and the victimizers. The author pays close attention to the gendered aspects of torture, as well as the conditions that produced a polarized mindset in both guerrillas and counterinsurgency agents. In the chapter about torturers, the author focuses on Miguel Nazar Haro, the most famous torturer of the period. She also tells the story of those who made the journey from activism to collaboration with the terror machine and who are still in positions of power. In chapters 2 and 5, the author develops her main arguments. The former, "The Making of the Subversive," examines the government's psychological warfare to construct the internal enemy and how this enemy was conflated with other transgressive identities (i.e., hippie, gay, and drug addict) to convince society to support the antisubversive struggle. In the latter chapter, "The Family," McCormick exemplifies with the case of Lucio Cabañas's family how torture was intended to destroy not only the subversive but, by extension, their social and familial networks, allegedly for the sake of saving the country from communism.

Among the thousands of Mexicans tortured and traumatized for life, not even one was granted justice and compensation. As the author demonstrates, torture was effective "because police and military officers could employ it without reservation or fear of repercussion" (p. 3). In her conclusion, McCormick reflects on the lingering consequences of impunity and the failure of official initiatives to investigate the Dirty War. Given the graphic depiction of the horrors that prisoners underwent, this book is not an easy read. Yet *The Last Door* is a relevant addition to the historiography that challenges

the image of an authoritarian yet peaceful country and decenters 1968 as the most emblematic year in Cold War Mexico. The book is written in an accessible language and can be used for undergraduate courses on political violence in Mexico and beyond.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12487963

How the Military Remembers: Human Rights and Countermemories in Latin America. Edited by CYNTHIA E. MILTON and MICHAEL J. LAZZARA. Critical Human Rights. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2025. Photographs. Figures. Notes. Bibliographies. Index. xi, 324 pp. Cloth, $79.95.

A conjuntura dos anos 1960-70 foi condicionada pela Guerra Fria em todo o mundo. Na América Latina houve um ponto crítico em 1962, com a crise dos foguetes em Cuba. Faltou pouco para o início de uma guerra mundial nuclear.

A vitória da Revolução Cubana em 1959, a radicalização do conflito entre Washington e Havana, o apoio soviético a Cuba e o militantismo do regime de Fidel Castro suscitaram o aparecimento de grupos revolucionários na região. Em contraposição, com o apoio dos Estados Unidos, disseminaram-se regimes ditatoriais, liderados por exércitos nacionais que, conforme sua tradição, assumiram um papel de polícia na luta contra o chamado *inimigo interno*.

Para os militares – muitos formados na Escola das Américas, então sediada no Panamá, sob o patrocínio dos Estados Unidos –, guiados pela doutrina de segurança nacional e pelas experiências francesas no Vietnã e na Argélia, tratava-se de impedir que o continente caísse nas mãos do comunismo ateu.

Os insurgentes, por sua vez, acreditavam que a luta armada era possível e mesmo inevitável. A vitória da guerra revolucionária significaria a libertação do imperialismo e a construção do socialismo. Conjugada à nova guerra do Vietnã, iniciada em 1960, agora contra os Estados Unidos, a guerra de guerrilhas transformaria a cordilheira dos Andes numa gigantesca Sierra Maestra (Régis Debray). Para os revolucionários, assim como para os conservadores, não havia dúvida quanto ao caráter internacional do enfrentamento. Era uma luta de vida ou morte, um combate entre civilizações.

A experiência do socialismo democrático chileno, liderado por Salvador Allende, não escaparia dessa polarização. Também seria derrubado pela força e pela instauração de mais uma ditadura.

As múltiplas tentativas revolucionárias foram esmagadas ou neutralizadas (caso da Colômbia) por inaudita violência, adotando-se como política de Estado a tortura e os massacres de populações originárias (Peru, Guatemala e Colômbia).

Na sequência, houve nas décadas de 1980-90 em quase toda a América Latina processos negociados de transição democrática, inclusive apoiados, uma ironia da história, pelos governos dos Estados Unidos ou por organizações da sociedade civil norte-americana.

Teriam início então as batalhas de memória, sobretudo no contexto dos processos das chamadas Justiças de Transição e das Comissões da Verdade.

No livro organizado por Cynthia E. Milton e Michael J. Lazzara, treze pesquisadoras e pesquisadores vão esmiuçar a questão, investigando, em particular, os discursos das instituições, dos chefes militares e, em alguns casos, de responsáveis por torturas cometidas contra militantes revolucionários e contra pessoas comuns, acusadas de colaboração com os insurgentes.

O livro trata de três temáticas principais – discursos formulados, espaços de memória e memórias herdadas – em oito experiências nacionais: Brasil, Chile, Argentina, Uruguai, Guatemala, El Salvador, Colômbia e Peru. A três casos (Chile, Peru e Colômbia) dedicaram-se dois artigos.

Na análise dos discursos, avaliam-se as suas metamorfoses ao longo do tempo. Segundo os casos estudados, em diferentes combinações, distinguem-se três momentos que às vezes se entrelaçam, não se sucedendo em ordem predeterminada.

De início, a negação pura e simples das violências cometidas, a cultura do silêncio, o negacionismo.

Em seguida, frente às demandas das sociedades, a defesa acusatória: os militares teriam salvado a pátria, a civilização cristã e a própria existência das forças armadas de um perigo iminente. Sentem orgulho pelo que fizeram e acusam os que perderam no terreno das lutas de quererem vencer nos exercícios de memória. Os crimes, quando reconhecidos, são atribuídos a excessos cometidos pelas polícias ou/e forças auxiliares, e não pelos oficiais militares ou por diretivas oficiais que pudessem comprometer as instituições armadas. Além disso, mesmo as violências são justificadas como inevitáveis em situações de confronto militar.

Num terceiro momento, quando se instauram os processos e julgamentos de chefes militares ou/e de acusados por torturas, o discurso conhecerá uma nova mutação. Os militares agora se apropriam da chave dos direitos humanos, própria dos seus acusadores, para se apresentarem como vítimas de perseguições injustas que violam os proclamados direitos humanos.

É reveladora a exploração pelos militares dos espaços de memória. Nos casos particulares da Colômbia, do Peru e de El Salvador, as forças armadas implicam-se diretamente na estruturação de lugares de memória, tentando garantir posição hegemônica para as próprias concepções.

A terceira temática, a da pós-memória ou memória herdada, que investiga como se formam e se transformam as lembranças dos descendentes dos que viveram os conflitos, poderia ter recebido mais atenção pela sua complexidade e riqueza de significados, mas o texto de Lazzara é suficientemente instigante para descortinar horizontes que poderão ser ainda explorados em trabalhos vindouros.

São inegáveis outros aportes positivos e construtivos dessa obra coletiva: a interdisciplinaridade promovida pelo encontro de sociólogos, cientistas políticos, historiadores e especialistas em estudos culturais e literários; a possibilidade de efetuar comparações, fundamentais para a melhor compreensão de processos com nítido caráter internacional; os debates conceituais, envolvendo interlocuções com especialistas latino-americanos e

pensadores de outras regiões que tratam das questões em debate (entre outros, Beatriz Sarlo, Elizabeth Jelin, Nancy J. Gates Madsen, Judith Butler, Steve J. Stern, Michel Foucault e Pierre Bourdieu); a riqueza das indicações bibliográficas e notas pormenorizadas, atestando a qualidade acadêmica dos pesquisadores.

Tais virtudes não nos impedem de identificar alguns problemas, a serem mais bem trabalhados em obras ulteriores.

No conjunto dos artigos, são escassas as referências à conjuntura que ensejou ditaduras e guerrilhas na América Latina. Não sendo esse o objeto dos artigos, poderia haver, sem embargo, uma introdução ao tema. Também são escassas as referências às tradições de polícia das forças armadas na região. Os discursos dos militares receberiam outra iluminação se a questão tivesse sido trabalhada. Além disso, o caráter internacional do processo, evidenciado nas metamorfoses semelhantes dos discursos militares, é pouco ou nada elucidado, em prejuízo de uma compreensão mais clara daquilo que se passou.

Caberia, ademais, evitar o amálgama entre revolucionários e populações atingidas pelas violências dos Estados. Se as violações dos direitos humanos não se justificam de modo nenhum, e em nenhuma circunstância, o fato é que os guerrilheiros não podem aparecer como vítimas sem agência própria, pois travaram a luta com plena consciência de seus riscos e perigos.

Finalmente, mas não menos importante, as bases sociais e históricas do autoritarismo na América Latina não são elucidadas. Com efeito, as violações dos direitos humanos são moeda corrente há séculos na região, ensejando tendências autoritárias transversais, condicionando o comportamento de todas as classes sociais, e não apenas das elites. Eis aí um quadro que precisaria ser mais bem explicado e interpretado, em proveito de uma melhor compreensão das violências cometidas.

Em não pequena medida, tais problemas, talvez pudessem ter sido ao menos parcialmente corrigidos se houvesse entre os participantes mais historiadores e/ou mais profissionais trabalhando e estudando nos países da América Latina.

Apesar dessas ressalvas, o livro coletivo é notável pela sua abrangência, diversidade de abordagens, reflexões conceituais e desenvolvimento de debates que ainda hoje agitam o continente latino-americano.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488243

Lula: A People's President and the Fight for Brazil's Future. By ANDRE PAGLIARINI. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2025. Notes. Index. 292 pp. Paper, $22.95.

Over the last 50 years, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has become the globally best-known Brazilian political figure. He is now in his third term as president of Brazil, and what makes him unique is his background as migrant from the Northeast and as metalworker in São Paulo's industrial belt. Making sense of Lula's trajectory has challenged journalists, academics, and members of the country's socioeconomic elite, and historical scholarship on his life has not done him justice. How could a man with his educational

and professional background become an effective political leader and shape Brazil's future in the age of neoliberal globalization?

Andre Pagliarini's petit bourgeois tale lacks depth and complexity. The few selected quotes by Lula are insightful and reveal his character but are drowned out by elite media coverage and short journalistic pieces. Pagliarini repeatedly highlights that Lula made it, a neoliberal misreading of Lula's priorities (pp. 127–35). Rather than a developed interpretation, we get snapshots, a book that never addresses the larger historical timeline. Neither the police shooting of a cobbler in São Paulo in 1917 nor the Russian Revolution the same year, however, provide the needed historical context for Lula's trajectory. Instead, Pagliarini's narrative focuses on the very recent present, with ahistorical references sprinkled throughout the early chapters, as if Lula had always lived for the twenty-first century and his presidencies.

A deeper historical analysis would highlight the triumph of neoliberal logic and the ever-greater concentration of wealth globally and in Brazil, which has worked against Lula's long-standing desire to foment greater socioeconomic equality and transfer wealth to the poor. The favorable economic conditions of the 2000s allowed Lula as president to pursue the latter without having to challenge the former, but ultimately the global finance system imposed ever-stricter limits on reformist aspirations. Lula's bourgeois interpreters either overlooked this important historical context in telling Lula's story or deliberately belittled his accomplishments.

Admittedly, it is not easy for historians—working primarily with the written record—to balance the scarce documentation of Lula's working-class life with the comparatively rich material on him as a leading public figure. John French's more thoroughly researched account of Lula's life faced the same challenge. Historians of internal migrants and industrial workers can rarely draw on rich archival documentation or fair media coverage. Without using the full range of the historian's toolbox, in this case relying heavily on social, economic, and political history, telling Lula's history remains shallow.

Pagliarini's interpretation of the 2002 presidential election victory exemplifies the results of such imbalance in source material and analysis. In his inaugural address, Lula committed to a public safety agenda that would "give an extraordinary boost to the national project of building, in this corner of America, a global bastion of tolerance, democratic pluralism, and respectful coexistence with differences" (quoted on p. 129). Pagliarini interprets "the significance of Lula's comment" to be "less about the words themselves than about who was delivering them" (p. 129), downplaying Lula's commitment to all Brazilians' collective well-being and focusing instead on his personal trajectory. That interpretation may reflect the spirit of our individualist neoliberal age, but it misrepresents Lula's underlying politics. Where is the central argument about how Lula shaped Brazilian politics over 50 years in public life?

Instead, Pagliarini provides a meandering narrative drawing heavily on elite newspapers, above all the *Folha de S. Paulo* and the *Estado de S. Paulo*, implicitly measuring Lula's performance as manager of Brazil in the interest of the forces of globalization. We read about Lula as presented and interpreted by those others rarely interested in being fair to him or his historical role. Pagliarini does not offer a critical, independent analytical

framework. This lack of conceptual clarity is the book's greatest weakness, more serious than the numerous factual errors, regular presentist references, and absence of a bibliography and comprehensive index.

Any academic book should pose a clear question, however narrow, and offer a preliminary answer. Otherwise, it will not advance knowledge. My field, the contemporary history of Brazil, too rarely publishes on the concerns that moved Lula to become a politician. Thirty years ago, starting a PhD on Brazilian history, I expected that our generation would revise and refine foundational political and socioeconomic narratives, by Thomas Skidmore and other *brasilianistas*, but the field soon went in a very different direction. The resulting weakness of the English-language historiography on contemporary Brazil is not Pagliarini's fault, but maybe books that reinforce the confusion should best remain unwritten. This is especially true in a time of extreme concentration of wealth, which facilitates the manufacturing of consent, prolongs the legacy of postmodern relativism, and allows AI to erode opportunities to get closer to the truth.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488107

Driving Terror: Labor, Violence, and Justice in Cold War Argentina. By KAREN ROBERT. Diálogos Series. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2025. Photographs. Map. Figures. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xxi, 314 pp. Paper, $29.95.

Karen Robert ofrece en *Driving Terror* una aproximación novedosa y creativa a algunos de los hitos más relevantes de la historia argentina reciente, utilizando la historia del Ford Falcon como hilo conductor de una trama que recorre más de medio siglo de transformaciones sociales, políticas y culturales. La autora parte de la llegada de la empresa Ford a la Argentina y su inserción en los proyectos desarrollistas de los años sesenta, para luego adentrarse en las experiencias de activismo sindical de los trabajadores de la planta de General Pacheco y la represión que sufrieron durante la última dictadura militar, en colaboración con altos ejecutivos de la compañía. El relato se extiende hasta los avatares más recientes de los procesos de búsqueda de justicia que condujeron a una resignificación del Falcon en las memorias colectivas.

El libro se estructura en seis capítulos que abarcan desde los orígenes del modelo Ford Falcon en Estados Unidos en la década de 1960 hasta la sentencia judicial dictada en 2018 contra ejecutivos de Ford Argentina por su complicidad en crímenes de lesa humanidad. El primer capítulo reconstruye la llegada del Falcon al país y su inscripción en el proyecto desarrollista de Arturo Frondizi, subrayando el papel simbólico del automóvil como emblema de progreso y movilidad social ascendente. El segundo capítulo examina los vaivenes de la industria automotriz y de sus trabajadores, considerando el fracaso del modelo de "aristocracia obrera" y el impacto en los activismos sindicales de los procesos de radicalización política de fines de los sesenta y principios de los setenta. El tercer capítulo se centra en la organización sindical dentro de la planta de Ford en Pacheco y

documenta la creciente hostilidad empresarial y estatal hacia el activismo obrero, que culminó en la represión abierta tras el golpe de 1976. En el cuarto capítulo, Robert analiza el uso sistemático del Falcon por parte de los grupos de tareas de la dictadura, explorando cómo sus cualidades técnicas y su visibilidad social lo convirtieron en un instrumento clave del terrorismo de Estado. El quinto capítulo retoma las trayectorias de los trabajadores secuestrados que lograron sobrevivir, deteniéndose en sus esfuerzos por reconstruir sus vidas, denunciar la complicidad empresarial y participar en los primeros mecanismos de justicia transicional en democracia. Finalmente, el sexto capítulo recorre el prolongado proceso judicial que culminó con la condena de directivos de Ford, y analiza las estrategias de memoria, documentación y litigio que hicieron posible esa sentencia, subrayando el protagonismo de los sobrevivientes y la centralidad del Falcon como símbolo resignificado de impunidad y lucha por la justicia.

Uno de los aspectos más originales de la obra es la manera en que entrelaza la historia del consumo y la producción industrial con la de la violencia y el terror estatal. Robert se apoya en la literatura sobre automovilidad para mostrar cómo el Falcon fue apropiado por distintos sectores sociales y cargado de significados cambiantes a lo largo de las décadas. Así el libro constituye también una valiosa contribución a los estudios de la memoria, al demostrar cómo un objeto cotidiano puede ser resignificado en función de experiencias colectivas divergentes. Esta diversidad de registros y escalas permite a la autora abordar al Falcon no sólo como un emblema de la violencia estatal, sino como un objeto que condensa y refleja transformaciones más amplias del capitalismo industrial en el contexto de la Guerra Fría latinoamericana, atravesado por los imaginarios del desarrollo material, el progreso económico, el modelo de familia de clase media y las expectativas de ascenso social. La persistencia del Falcon como objeto de deseo en la cultura popular argentina convive, sin embargo, con su inscripción traumática como emblema del accionar clandestino de la dictadura. Robert explora esta ambivalencia sin caer en reduccionismos: el Falcon no es meramente un símbolo, sino un artefacto que materializó relaciones de poder, aspiraciones sociales y violencias represivas.

Desde el punto de vista metodológico, la autora combina fuentes de muy diversa índole –entrevistas, archivos empresariales, documentos desclasificados, publicidades, arte, cultura visual, literatura y materiales judiciales– con un enfoque interdisciplinario que dialoga con campos tan productivos como la historia del trabajo, la historia empresarial, la historia del consumo, la historia cultural y material del objeto, la historia de la represión dictatorial y los estudios de memoria. Dentro de cada uno de estos campos, *Driving Terror* dialoga con líneas de investigación que, en las últimas décadas, han renovado la historiografía latinoamericana y argentina. La obra destaca por el rigor en el uso de las fuentes y por su capacidad para articular escalas de análisis que van desde la historia global del fordismo y la Guerra Fría en el continente hasta las trayectorias individuales y personales de los trabajadores y sus familias. Todo ello se presenta a partir de una escritura clara y accesible, que facilita su lectura por parte tanto de públicos académicos como no especializados.

En suma, *Driving Terror* constituye una obra valiosa para quienes investigan la historia reciente argentina, ofreciendo una mirada innovadora sobre la relación entre industria, represión y derechos humanos.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488275

The Making of Revolutionary Feminism in El Salvador. By DIANA CAROLINA SIERRA BECERRA. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2025. Photographs. Maps. Figures. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xvi, 277 pp. Paper, $32.99.

El Salvador endured a brutal 12-year civil war (1980–92) that cost upwards of 80,000 lives, hundreds of thousands injured, and more than one million displaced from their homes, all in a nation of five million people roughly the size of Massachusetts. The antagonists in the war were the Salvadoran government/army, backed by the United States, and the insurgent, leftist guerrilla organization, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), which had some support from Cuba and other socialist states but nothing comparable to the billions of dollars that the US poured into the coffers of the Salvadoran government.

Many words have been written about the war, although given its recency, the historiography is naturally nascent and evolving. Coming out of the war, much of the scholarship tended to follow an institutional approach, or what Diana Carolina Sierra Becerra calls a "revolution from above" approach, which focuses on the FMLN and the Salvadoran government/army, and places the conflict within the international context of the Cold War (p. 17). This approach was encouraged by the antagonists themselves, because they became rival political parties after the war and thus tended to promote themselves within the context of the war and their respective objectives within it.

Recently, within the last decade or so, scholarship on the war has evolved, focusing more on the "revolution from below," meaning the rank-and-file combatants and the hundreds of thousands of members of mass organizations who comprised the backbone of the insurgent opposition (p. 17). Sierra Becerra places her work squarely in the revolution-from-below camp. In Sierra Becerra's words, "Scholarship has sometimes exaggerated the role of urban intellectuals in building the armed movement; this history refutes that" (p. 93). Sierra Becerra insists not only that the mass organizations had a degree of autonomy from the guerrilla leadership but also that the vast majority of their members were women. Sierra Becerra aptly titles the introduction to her book "Sin la mujer, no hay revolución" (Without women, there is no revolution).

Sierra Becerra's evidence consists of over 50 interviews with women who participated in the insurgency in various capacities, as well as a diverse array of archival documents. The substantive presence of women in the insurgency forced the issue of sexism and patriarchy onto the table and resulted in debates about whether the revolution was primarily about class liberation or also about gender liberation. Some considered the

latter to be a "deviation" from the core class-based goals of the insurgency (quoted on p. 179), but Sierra Becerra contends that "women's organizing set limits to sexism" within the revolutionary ranks and contributed substantively to women's consciousness and organizational activities after the war was over (p. 169).

Sierra Becerra focuses on three topics: the country's teachers' union, the National Association of Salvadoran Educators, June 21 (ANDES 21 de Junio), which was 80 percent female and many of whose members radicalized in the 1970s and affiliated with the Popular Liberation Forces Farabundo Martí (FPL), one of the guerrilla factions that would form the FMLN in 1980; the "everyday politics of armed struggle," which focuses on the distinct gendered aspects of the rebel front, ranging from menstruation and reproductive choices to sexual violence; and the Association of Women of El Salvador (AMES), a women's organization that was formed within the ranks of the FPL during the war. Sierra Becerra's work is at its best when it is in the weeds of those three specific topics, when the voices of the sources come to life and nuance our understanding of the civil war. Sierra Becerra's work on AMES and the everyday politics of armed struggle are quite original; less so is her look at ANDES 21 de Junio and the teachers' strikes of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In regard to feminist studies, Sierra Becerra takes on what she identifies as the "dominant narrative of Salvadoran feminism," which consists of a particular periodization of feminist activism and, correspondingly, interpretations of what female guerrillas experienced during the war (p. 33). In particular, she takes aim at Jocelyn Viterna's *Women in War: The Micro-Processes of Mobilization in El Salvador* (2013), saying that Viterna inaccurately attributes a false consciousness to female combatants who insist that gender equity was the norm within the guerrilla camps.

At times Sierra Becerra's work lacks nuance or rather seems a little partisan. For example, at one point she writes that "by 1975, teachers and peasants joined forces to overthrow the political and economic system that exploited the working class" (p. 61). A more accurate statement would be that *some* teachers and peasants joined forces; it is a subtle but important distinction.

All in all, Sierra Becerra's work makes a valuable contribution to the emerging "revolution from below" approach to El Salvador's civil war, particularly by showing that women were indeed a cornerstone of the insurgency.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488043

Informal Cities: Histories of Governance and Inequality in Latin Europe, Latin America, and Colonial North Africa. Edited by CHARLOTTE VORMS and BRODWYN FISCHER. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2025. Photographs. Maps. Figures. Notes. Index. 359 pp. Paper, $35.00.

As a field, urban informality can seem to be everywhere and nowhere. Since emerging in studies of Africa and Latin America in the 1970s it has generated significant research and conceptual tools. Like a mirage, however, it seems to vanish just as you grasp it. The field

gravitates toward the global South, within the contested boundaries of the favela, the shantytown, or the slum. Yet its essence is not in these physical locations but in their relationships to the city around them. These relationships are forged by real estate, government policy, and technocratic ideas about poverty, all opening bewilderingly local gaps between law and practice. The field lends itself to prismatically diverse politics; its scope is vast, its dynamics minute. And the curious researcher is left to wonder, What exactly is urban informality? Where is the conversation here?

By "historicizing informal urbanization" on a transatlantic scale and including both policy and practice, *Informal Cities* offers one of the most important answers to date (p. 3). Few have approached this topic with the clarity and depth of research of Brodwyn Fischer on Brazil, and here she and Charlotte Vorms bring this clarity to a broader scale, including Latin America, "Latin Europe," and North Africa, across more than a century.

The volume builds on earlier efforts to unite informality scholars across disciplines and geographies. Ananya Roy and Nezar AlSayyad's pathbreaking volume *Urban Informality: Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia* (2004) brought innovative Latin American conceptual tools into conversation with the Middle East. Fischer's own *Cities from Scratch: Poverty and Informality in Urban Latin America* (2014), edited with Bryan McCann and Javier Auyero, linked research across Latin America by insisting on empirical specificity. By connecting relevant European cases with the global South, *Informal Cities* is an innovative companion to these volumes.

The point here is different, though. *Informal Cities* is an effort not to conjoin an eclectic field but instead to build a unified framework so that the field can advance on firm ground. The result is less flashy but more rewarding. Fighting "informality's polysemy and contradictions," Fischer and Vorms work toward "a precisely delimited version of the concept" (p. 4). Informality is not "a moral abstraction, a political stance, or a conjunctural crisis," they write, but rather "a particular articulation of power and resources" (p. 4). Unpacking this articulation requires the tools of history, which reveal that "informal urbanization is created by the very processes of legal, political, and economic modernization that it is often said to undermine" (p. 3).

To illustrate this with clarity requires work. With Braudelian ambitions, the volume insists on historicism, allowing each chapter to manage two lines of inquiry at different scales. First, there is a *longue durée* account of housing for the poor in physical terms. Here we see chapters of broad chronology recount the emergence of poor neighborhoods in Italy, Mexico, and Spain in unremarkable exurbs with unremarkable politics. They reveal that only over time do such areas become informal. Madrid, writes Vorms, "showcases planning's role . . . in dividing urban spaces" (p. 75). "What makes Mexican informality distinct is not its colonial past but its revolutionary origin," write Antonio Azuela and Emilio de Antuñano (p. 29).

The shantytown, then, emerged long before the idea of the shantytown as a distinct problem of governance. The remaining chapters incorporate this simple reality, allowing for precision on a second line of inquiry focused on when such ideas emerged and how they evolved at specific political moments. We see informality driven by Fascist hostility in Italian *baracche*, decades-long legal swings in Venezuelan barrios, the politicization of

land occupations (*tomas*) in Chile long after they began, and the conflicted role of Catholic social workers limiting growth in Brazilian favelas. In these accounts, the modernizing forces of the mid-twentieth century served to define poor neighborhoods as problematic in ways that "reinforced forms of power that are not subject to institutional constraints" (p. 5). Through its many forms, informality was always a policy choice.

There is a risk of top-down emphasis in this approach, of portraying the urban poor as victims. Yet one of the great strengths of the volume is that, through historical methodology, such questions are not abstract. Focused on racial and colonial ideologies in Brazil, France, and North Africa, the volume's final chapters land with force because the impact of these ideologies is so concrete. The focus is not on ideas at fixed points in time, where their roots remain hidden. Informality was "slavery's vital afterlife" (p. 198), a "screen onto which Europeans projected a range of anxieties" (p. 245). Ideas have legacies, legacies become policy, and policies shape the physical geography of cities. Battles for rights to the city were waged on both sides.

The concept of urban informality has found firm ground. This is an excellent, tightly organized volume, charting an open path for new research across disciplines. It should be read by anyone interested in why cities look the way they do.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488091

Informal Metropolis: Life on the Edge of Mexico City, 1940–1976. By DAVID YEE. Confluencias. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2024. Photographs. Map. Figures. Table. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xxvii, 268 pp. Paper, $30.00.

In this study of one of the most significant urban developments of the twentieth century, David Yee discusses the origins of Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl, or Ciudad Neza as it is popularly known, a sprawling informal city located east of Mexico City's historic center, and argues that it played a founding role in the capital's history of social activism. Yee presents Ciudad Neza's history through the lens of rural migrants who began to arrive in large numbers after 1940, the date that most historians mark as the start of the Mexican miracle, a period of intense demographic and economic growth that lasted until the 1970s and transformed both Mexico and its capital. However, daily life was challenging for those who settled on the formed lake bed of Texcoco, the site that eventually became Ciudad Neza. Yee argues that labor was the determinant factor in deciding who lived in Ciudad Neza and who went to the better *colonias*, or neighborhoods, in other locations. Some of those families ended up in the large Le Corbusier–style complexes overseen by the Mexican Institute of Social Security. Yee's analysis places these migrants as the favored skilled workers of the 1910 revolution while those unskilled workers on the margins struggled to acquire basic services, including electricity and water, and were preyed on by corrupt land developers. However, Yee notes that the residents of Ciudad Neza organized potent civic organizations and were helped by activists, even if divisions later formed and some chose to ally themselves with the powerful ruling party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party.

It is these tensions and struggles that form the heart of this book. Yee delves into daily life, including the portrayal of Ciudad Neza's "vulgar hybridity" (pp. xvii, 80), a term that can best be defined as a fusion of rural and urban culture that developed outside the carefully crafted official spaces that Mexico's ruling party struggled to forge for the nation's urban population. Heavily criticized by Mexico's intellectuals and official media, this hybrid space is perhaps Mexico's greatest strength and fueled the growth of civic activism in Ciudad Neza in the late 1960s and early 1970s. While Yee devotes the study's first two sections to the early history of Ciudad Neza and how the Mexican state, developers, and migrants came together in the informal city, the last section delves into Mexico's tumultuous years under the presidency of Luis Echeverría and how his policies affected the nation's housing crisis.

Yee's research and writing is engaging, uncovering the history of a community often absent in official histories yet one that played an important part in the development of one of the world's largest cities. Utilizing vital archives from Ciudad Neza as well as a comprehensive array of other sources, Yee's study is a valuable portrayal that challenges the idea that informal and marginal cities are ignored by central governments. In the case of Ciudad Neza, we see that government policies and even members of the Jesuit order had a hand in its development. More importantly, the city played a role in Mexico's civic protests during the early 1970s. *Informal Metropolis* brings the city and its people alive, reminding us that history is also written by those who allegedly live at the margins.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-12488003