

OUT FROM THE SHADOWS:
Recent Scholarship on Late-Nineteenth-Century Mexico

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LAS RASGADURAS DE LA DESCOLONIZACION: ESPAÑOLES Y MEXICANOS A MEDIADOS DEL SIGLO XIX. By Romana Falcón. (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1996. Pp. 368.)

THE CITY OF MEXICO IN THE AGE OF DIAZ. By Michael Johns. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997. Pp. 142. \$25.00 cloth, \$14.95 paper.)

EMPRESA EXTRANJERA Y MERCADO INTERNO: EL FERROCARRIL CENTRAL MEXICANO, 1880-1907. By Sandra Kuntz Ficker. (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1995. Pp. 391.)

FERROCARRILES Y VIDA ECONOMICA EN MEXICO (1850-1950): DEL SURGIMIENTO TARDIO AL DECAIMIENTO PRECOZ. Edited by Sandra Kuntz Ficker and Paolo Riguzzi. (Mexico City: Colegio Mexiquense, Ferrocarriles Nacionales de México, and Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Xochimilco, 1996. Pp. 383.)

MEXICO AT THE WORLD'S FAIRS: CRAFTING A MODERN NATION. By Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996. Pp. 373. \$45.00 cloth.)

IN THE SHADOW OF EAGLES: SONORA AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE BORDER DURING THE PORFIRIATO. By Miguel Tinker Salas. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997. Pp. 347. \$40.00 cloth.)

For far too long, the historiography of late-nineteenth-century Mexico has been held hostage to the Revolution of 1910. The momentous struggle and the revolutionary state that was forged in its wake have cast a towering shadow over the Restored Republic (1867–1876) and the Porfiriato (1876–1911). This shadow has had the unfortunate consequence of defining the nature of the questions that historians have posed about these earlier periods. Scholars who lauded the accomplishments of the revolution went to great lengths to contrast President Lázaro Cárdenas's social compact with peasants and workers with the Porfirian state's emphasis on economic development and nation building, often at the expense of the working classes. The revisionist historiographical assault on the Mexican Revolu-

tion, which gained momentum soon after the Tlatelolco massacre in 1968 and still holds powerful sway,¹ countered this celebratory history by insisting pessimistically that the one-party state bore an eerie affinity to the authoritarian *ancien régime* that preceded it.²

Succeeding generations of intellectuals have grown increasingly disillusioned with the commitment of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) to democratization and have been drawn irresistibly to making comparisons between Díaz's dictatorship and the postrevolutionary state. A few notable exceptions such as Cosío Villegas's nine-volume *Historia moderna* (1955–1972) sought to evaluate the Restoration and the Porfiriato on their own terms. Most revisionists, however, have stressed continuity over change and viewed the last half of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century as a proving ground for everything from political ideology to precursor movements to agrarian unrest to help explain why Mexico descended into civil war and chaos after 1911. If such telescoping of the past by critics and defenders alike demanded that revolutionary historians come to terms with Mexico prior to the conflict, it more often meant that these earlier periods were treated as little more than way stations on the road to a cataclysmic revolution or a thoroughly modern Mexico.

Happily, more recent scholarship on the late nineteenth century is emerging from the shadow of the revolution and examining these two periods on their own merits. Michael Johns in *The City of Mexico in the Age of Díaz* may even be going to the proverbial extreme by arguing provocatively that the Porfiriato may have been the key moment in Mexican history: "the national character, I am suggesting, has barely changed since the age of Díaz" (p. 4). This concise yet lively synthesis concentrates on the kaleidoscopic changes that enveloped the national capital during the Porfiriato, using the era as a lens for gazing at Mexican national culture. Johns, a cultural geographer, is less interested in mapping the spatial changes in the city (despite a fair amount of detail on the face-lift that Porfirian modernizers gave the Federal District) than in providing readers with a socio-cultural portrait of the national metropolis at the turn of the century. Johns brushes his canvas with sweeping strokes. Chapter titles are dichotomous oppositions—city and nation, east and west, peasants and provincials, appearance and reality. The result is a starkly drawn picture of urban haves and have-nots who inhabited discrete worlds: elites who

1. Its antecedents can be traced back to Daniel Cosío Villegas and like-minded critics of the institutionalization of the revolution in the 1940s and 1950s. For a thoughtful discussion of Cosío Villegas's critique of the institutionalization of the Mexican Revolution, see Charles Hale (1974).

2. For an overview of Porfirian historiography, see Thomas Benjamin and Marcial Ocasio-Meléndez (1984).

sought to create their own *ambiente*, relying all the while on Western ideas, style, and technology; and an urban underclass who struggled ingeniously to survive under taxing circumstances with little assistance from public officials. Johns's metaphoric description of the capital as a parasite that siphoned off the material and human resources of the neighboring countryside is arresting.

Unfortunately, Johns never proves his argument that the Mexican national character was forged by the Porfirians. To do so convincingly would require comparing turn-of-the-century Mexico City with the present metropolis and would also necessitate proving that what happened before the Porfiriato left no substantive imprint on the national culture. Instead, he glosses over the colonial and early national periods and rarely ventures beyond 1911. Moreover, while Johns avoids systematic comparisons with other primate cities in Latin America, the United States, or Europe, he does not shy away from making sweeping statements: "[L]ike no other city in the Americas, the capital of Mexico mixed the top hat and the sombrero, the mansion and the hut, the refinements of the aesthete and the squalor of the peasant" (pp. 42–43). Elsewhere, "[A]nd it seemed mongrel because Mexico City, like no other capital in Latin America, combined city and countryside, Spaniard and Indian, and dandy and peasant into an uncertain and volatile mixture" (p. 58). Nor does Johns engage the work of others who have written on the capital during this period, leaving the reader unsure of how his account differs from work by Alejandra Moreno Toscano (1972, 1978), Hira Gortari de Rabiela and Regina Hernández Franyuti (1988), María Dolores Morales (1978), and Jonathan Kandell (1988), among others. Curiously, *The City of Mexico in the Age of Díaz* ends abruptly without a conclusion that might have tied the book's main themes together.

Perhaps this reader is also uncomfortable with Johns's preoccupation with presenting a psychological profile of the Mexican people during this period. Generalizations abound. Commenting on the curiosity of Mexicans, Johns asserts, "The guileless curiosity of peasant and gentry alike was symptomatic of a deeper problem: the individual freedoms that came with railroads, markets, and city streets were not matched by a sense of public responsibility" (p. 74). After discussing the symbolic importance of Holy Saturday to *capitalino* urban dwellers, Johns opines, "Revenge for an act of betrayal: it answered a need deep in Mexican history" (p. 84). In another example of *The City of Mexico's* Octavio Paz-like characterization of Mexican political culture, Johns intones: "Mexicans lived in the gaps between the spoken word and its real meaning, between the written law and its practical application, between the form of politics and the substance of statecraft, between a fawning deference to superiors and a deep resentment of authority. The world of Mexicans was oblique, emotional and personalist" (p. 91; compare with Paz 1961). While it goes without saying that any book that addresses the subject of a national character must generalize, the

conspicuous absence of qualifiers may leave some readers uneasy and may undercut the first-rate primary research that Johns has conducted.

While Johns looks at Mexico from the center out, Miguel Tinker Salas's *In the Shadow of Eagles: Sonora and the Transformation of the Border during the Porfiriato* views the Porfirian state from the outside inward. This model regional study began life as a dissertation. Tinker Salas focuses on the roots of northwestern society: its transformation from a peripheral backwater to a bustling border state. In some ways, this work is a second-generation regional history in asking questions different from those posed by earlier regional historians of the 1970s and 1980s, who were preoccupied with political economy and the rising revolutionary temper of the late Porfiriato. Tinker Salas, reflecting the concerns of his generation, zeroes in on the construction of multiple identities: how European, mestizo, North American, Asian, and indigenous residents sought to coexist against a backdrop of endemic violence in this peripheral region. Eleven closely argued chapters provide vibrant snapshots of *norteño* life. They take advantage of regional and municipal archives in Sonora, national collections in Mexico City, private papers of Sonoran notables, materials culled from Arizona archives, and U.S. State Department records. Thus *In the Shadow of Eagles* is a felicitous melding of painstaking primary research and careful historical analysis. Tinker Salas moves effortlessly from desert Minas Prietas and La Colorada mining camps to the cauldron of Hermosillo to the humid Guaymas coast to illustrate how Sonoran notables participated actively in forging this border region throughout the Porfiriato, in spite of the formidable presence of U.S. capital. His mentor, Ramón Eduardo Ruíz, wrote a blistering account of the deleterious impact of U.S. investment in the region (Ruíz 1988). In contrast, Tinker Salas is more concerned with how Sonorans—regional elites and workers, Mexican émigrés and Chinese immigrants, U.S. mining interests and British railway magnates—doggedly battled the forbidding environment, hostile indigenous groups, and each other to build a uniquely *norteño* society.

One of the liveliest parts of *In the Shadow of Eagles* is the chapter on the adjoining border towns of Ambos Nogales. Tinker Salas presents a nuanced picture of how cultural tensions and economic competition deteriorated at times into ugly racial conflict yet failed to discourage “the economic and social rapport operating between business groups in Nogales” (p. 6). After Mexico lost the Mesilla Valley in 1853, the character of Sonora's northern frontier gradually changed from a bleak landscape dominated by recalcitrant Apaches to a thriving border community where nationality became more fluid as individuals gravitated from one culture to the other as needed. Symbolic of this phenomenon was Brickwood's Saloon, which straddled both sides of the boundary. Patrons evaded the laws of either country by simply moving from one side of the room to the other, as circumstances warranted. Tinker Salas implicitly takes on Oscar Martínez and

other scholars of border communities in contending that residents of Ambos Nogales did not create a uniform cultural construct that set it apart from Sonorans and Arizonans. Rather, these border communities represented a complex and shifting amalgam that meant different things to different groups at different times: "Border society reflected an ongoing process of conflict, exchange, adaptation, and reinvention propelled by class, the character of economic exchange, the area's relation to the national economy, gender and immigration" (p. 149). For Tinker Salas, class becomes the overlooked yet complicating component of identity. Mexicans and Anglos adopted each other's customs and practices while preserving their own traditions. But the economic interdependence of Sonoran and U.S. commercial and mining interests prompted cooperation between these groups to impose a symbiotic vision of what the new community should be like. Members of the working classes who did not share that perspective either ignored it or clashed periodically with authorities or local business owners. Officials of both countries responded by seeking ways to limit contact between workaday Mexicans and Anglos.

Given Sonora's prominent leadership role in the Mexican Revolution, Tinker Salas might be excused if he had spent some time tracing the roots of unrest in the region in his conclusion, but he avoids that *trampa*. Although Tinker Salas occasionally makes comparisons between Sonora and other northern states, he rarely (and only tentatively) engages the abundant scholarship on regional Mexico during the Porfiriato, unfortunately diminishing the chances of his work reaching a larger audience. Nor does he critique the literature on Sonora itself. Still, these are minor omissions in a mature regional study that deserves a wider audience.

Romana Falcón's *Las rasgaduras de la descolonización: Españoles y mexicanos a mediados del siglo XIX* examines Spanish-Mexican relations during the nineteenth century and offers another opportunity to study a subject free from the penumbra of the revolution. It is fitting that Professor Falcón teaches at El Colegio and the book was published by its press, given that school's origins and its historically close ties to the peninsula. Her book is not a traditional diplomatic history. Falcón is more concerned with teasing out how Spain and Mexico—that is, Spanish and Mexican elites—perceived each other. Ideas and culture matter more here than treaties and diplomacy. Even so, Falcón analyzes diplomatic events in some detail (especially in the second half of the book) to understand better what these two Hispanic countries thought of each other. Utilizing diplomatic sources and abundant periodicals printed in Spain and Mexico, Falcón has written an elegant account of a largely neglected dimension of the often tempestuous relationship between the mother country and her former colony.

For the most part, *Las rasgaduras de la descolonización* concentrates on the two or three decades in the middle of the nineteenth century, a period when relations had begun to normalize after Mexico's traumatic break

from Spain. As Falcón makes clear, however, they were still fraught with tension. Her principal argument is that Spanish elites and (to a lesser extent) their Mexican contemporaries, once they had recovered sufficiently from the shock of separation, came to view Mexico as the bulwark and shield of Catholic Hispanicism against the insidious infiltration of Protestant Anglo-Saxon cultural and material values from across the Rio Bravo. Language, religion, a way of life, and race became intertwined as Spaniards and Mexican creoles in the new nation distinguished themselves not only from Anglos but from multiple “others”—Indians, peasants, and the poor. In short, Mexico became Spain’s heir in the eyes of elites on both sides of the Atlantic, a place where the ideals and traditions of Iberian civilization would be preserved in the New World. Although Falcón claims that middle-class and poor Spaniards also shared these attitudes, the evidence provided to sustain that contention is not that compelling, as she readily admits.

Several striking case studies flesh out Falcón’s thesis. First, she examines Spanish and Mexican reactions to Yucatecan authorities selling Maya prisoners of war to Cuban sugar *ingenios* during the Caste War. Falcón makes some uncharacteristically questionable assertions about the Caste War and Yucatán: that the switch to henequen led to the Caste War; that Sisal was Campeche’s principal port; that the Valladolid region was the most brutal and racist in the peninsula; and that indebted peons were slaves. She then analyzes the ideological and political implications of the episode to illustrate how the race question played itself out in Mexico, Spain, and Cuba. Spanish officials argued disingenuously that the introduction of Maya Indians and Chinese contract laborers in Cuba would ease race and class tensions on the island. In reality, they sought to placate Cuban *hacendados*, who increasingly were feeling the effects of British anti-slavery policy and were worried about the recrudescence of slave rebellions. Self-serving Cuban merchants provided Yucatecan authorities with much-needed arms in exchange for exclusive rights to import the Maya prisoners. Corrupt Yucatecan politicians later undermined the original intent of the policy and shipped Mayas who had never fought in the Caste War to work on Cuban plantations. Meanwhile, Santa Anna and other Mexican politicians played both sides of the issue, wavering between venting rhetorical outrage at the forced shipment of Maya prisoners and winking and nodding at the sordid episode in order to accommodate commercial interests and to assuage ruffled diplomatic feathers. Readers also learn how the British, who were aghast at the Mayas’ enslavement, lashed back at the Yucatecans by arming the rebel Mayas through their commercial contacts in Belize. The result is a fascinating reexamination of a shameful but revealing moment in Mexico’s past. Despite the elaborate “spin-doctoring” by all parties involved, Falcón shows masterfully that all were moved by self-interest—at the expense of the Mayas.

Falcón also studies the turbulent relationship between Spanish ha-

cendados and their overseers of sugar estates in Morelos on one side and campesinos on the other during the Wars of the Reform. As violence erupted, Spanish landowners and their administrators became special targets of liberal leaders like Juan Alvarez and local *caciques* in Morelos and the neighboring lowlands. Here Falcón's research complements Florencia Mallon's *Peasant and Nation* (1995), which documents similar reprisals but is more concerned with the motivations of campesinos than the response of Spanish hacendados or Mexican officials. Members of the Spanish colony in Mexico, many of whom were sympathetic to the conservative cause, had to walk a fine line as Mexico descended into civil war. Falcón injects ambiguity, explaining how Spaniards failed to speak with one voice when peninsular liberals committed to land reform during the 1850s threw their support to Benito Juárez.

The second half of *Las rasgaduras* traces the diplomatic twists and turns during the Reform and Maximilian's empire. Divided sentiment over the Mexican debt to the European powers as well as ambivalent feelings toward Maximilian (and the benefits of monarchy) prove just how difficult it is to generalize about how the Spanish felt about Mexico during these decades. In a sense, Falcón has provided such a complex picture that her detailed research may undermine her own thesis about how elites in Spain and Mexico reacted to the symbolic importance of Mexico upholding the values of Hispanic civilization in the New World. After reading her excellent synthesis of bilateral relations, it is hard to imagine these elites agreeing on any uniform vision of Mexico's purported role in the hemisphere. A concluding chapter that might have untangled the twisted skein of Mexican-Spanish relations is conspicuously absent. Still, *Las rasgaduras* is a fascinating account of the conflictive process of decolonization. Scholars are greatly in Professor Falcón's debt for complicating our understanding of this relationship.

Nuance and complexity have become trademarks of cultural studies. Of all the works under review, the only one that speaks the language of cultural history is Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo's *Mexico at the World's Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation*. This interdisciplinary monograph shows the author to be conversant with the scholarly literature and methodologies in literary, intellectual, and cultural history, anthropology, and art history. He analyzes critically Mexico's participation in world fairs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Tenorio-Trillo is also well versed in the literature on world's fairs. Readers learn what Europeans and North Americans expected in these exhibitions as well as the reasons why Asian, African, and Latin American countries were invited to participate. The Mexican exhibits at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1889 and the Paris World Fair of 1900 reveal something about the Western longing for the exotic and about Mexico's aspirations as an up-and-coming member of the community of "modern," "progressive," and "cosmopolitan" nations. These adjectives crop up

frequently throughout *Mexico at the World's Fairs* in framing the discussion of the Mexican technocratic elite's yearning for international respectability. Tenorio-Trillo demonstrates how national visions were constructed and re-constructed by Mexico's best and brightest at these fairs throughout the Porfiriato and then compares how these shifting visions were reproduced at world's fairs in Rio de Janeiro (1922) and Seville (1929). Nationalism, as represented symbolically in the images displayed at these exhibitions, became a powerful tool manipulated by political leaders to promote the interests of the nation-state. For Tenorio-Trillo, these images also illustrate just how influential the Western conception of nationalism was for aspiring Latin American nations.

Even though Tenorio-Trillo is more taken with the symbolic qualities of these exhibits and what they reveal about a national elite that went to great lengths to introduce itself to an international audience, he admits the existence of pragmatic reasons for Mexico's participation. The Porfirian regime lavished large sums of money on the fairs to present an idealized image of their country in hopes of promoting foreign investment and Northern European immigration. The human and material resources of Mexico were showcased selectively: virtues were prominently displayed, drawbacks made rare cameo appearances in which they were presented so as to accentuate the possibilities for improvement.

Funded and coordinated by the activist Porfirian state, the exhibitions were planned and designed by Mexico's "wizards of progress," as Tenorio-Trillo humorously labels them. Many were tied by kinship or friendship to the *científicos*. The exhibits had to be identifiably "Mexican," so Mexican art, archaeology, history, and commodities were highlighted. Yet the presentation also had to fall within certain parameters to make it acceptable to the norms and proscriptions of the Western establishment. The successful exhibition thus became a two-way street encouraging a dialogue between Mexico and the West in which each could learn from the other. Beyond highlighting abundant raw materials and a lush tropical landscape to encourage investment, the exhibits had to overcome stereotypical views that foreigners held of Mexico. As a result, the wizards stressed how the Díaz administration had pacified the countryside, how investments in railroads, port facilities, and other infrastructure promoted economic development, and how national investment in public sanitation works, especially the massive drainage project in the Federal District, was producing a healthier and more productive labor force.

Like Falcón, Tenorio-Trillo is interested in the prominent role that race played in constructing these exhibits. The Indian past was recreated by the wizards to fit prevailing Western "scientific" studies about the inferiority of native peoples. At the same time, the organizers had to suggest that these weaknesses might have silver linings for entrepreneurs interested in development opportunities. For example, the façade of the Aztec Palace at

the 1889 Paris Universal Exhibition explicitly praised Mexico's pre-Hispanic past, while the interior of the building alluded ambiguously to the superiority of the Mexican upper classes—defined as white—and the “scientific inferiority” of the indigenous and mestizos. Organizers sought to turn this weakness into a strength by demonstrating in their exhibits that a well-defined socio-racial hierarchy existed in Mexico and that Porfirian commitment to educating Indians and mestizos would ultimately remake the lower classes into responsible members of society. Tenorio-Trillo details the intellectual debates raging among Porfirian intellectuals about whether it was even possible to civilize the Indians. These debates were not idle philosophical discussions of abstractions. For Díaz and his lieutenants, they were the crux of how his administration should “pacify” rebellious groups such as the Maya in the eastern tropical forest and the Yaquis and Apaches in the north.³

Wielding a cutting-edge arsenal of methodological and critical tools, *Mexico at the World's Fairs* offers conclusions that are the most self-consciously revisionist of the six books under review. Tenorio-Trillo goes to great length to compare Porfirian exhibits with Mexico's participation in world's fairs after the revolution. He points out that despite differences in style and substance, later exhibitions reprised many of the fin-de-siècle themes—and even some of the same statues. Race and ethnic origin continued to be prominent themes after the revolution, especially given author José Vasconcelos's active participation in these later fairs. Hispanic values were displayed prominently at the Exposición Ibero-Americana in Seville in 1929, perhaps a fitting affirmation of Falcón's thesis of the persistence of fraternal ties between Iberian and Mexican elites. A legend inscribed on that fair's Maya-style pavilion waxed eloquent: “Mother Spain: because you have illuminated American lands with the brilliance of your culture and placed the devotional light of your spirit in my soul, now in both my land and soul those lights have blossomed. Méjico” (p. 222).

As Tenorio-Trillo concedes in a thoughtful epilogue, *Mexico at the World's Fairs* dwells on the perceptions and actions of a small, yet influential national elite (as does Falcón's study). Readers interested in alternative constructions of nationalism by the popular classes must look elsewhere (see Joseph and Nugent 1994; Mallon 1995). Nor does Tenorio-Trillo's study situate this type of undertaking in Díaz's larger strategy of foisting national

3. The term *pacification* became a euphemism for genocide. General Ignacio Bravo was chosen for his track record against the Yaqui of the northwest and subsequently directed the successful federal military campaign in the southeastern forest. He later wrote the president: “Your description of them [the rebel Maya] could not be more perfect. They are a race that for humanity's sake must be extinguished, because they will never amount to anything good. . . . I am convinced that the only way to guarantee the interests of the zone in general is to finish off the race, if that would be possible.” See Wells and Joseph (1996, 46).

unity on Mexico's many *patrias chicas*, as evidenced by Don Porfirio's symbolically charged visits to provincial capitals, the construction of statues of national heroes in the national capital, and independence day celebrations (see Beezley, Martin, and French 1994). Nonetheless, this book introduces perspectives from sister disciplines and thus pushes readers to think about this era in a way that stretches conventional historical categories. It should therefore resonate far beyond the narrow confines of Mexico's participation in a handful of international expositions.

Few branches of late-nineteenth-century Mexican history have been more constrained by the revisionist impulse than economic history. The silhouette here was cast not by the Mexican Revolution per se but by the econometric research of John Coatsworth. He argued in a seminal (1978) article entitled "Obstacles to Economic Growth in Nineteenth-Century Mexico" and in *Growth against Development: The Economic Impact of Railroads in Porfirian Mexico* that over the long run, the Porfirian export-led model posed barriers to development and to the railway system servicing the export sector that seriously limited opportunities for economic development (Coatsworth 1978, 1981). U.S. economic historians Robert Fogel and Albert Fishlow earlier questioned the direct and indirect effects of U.S. railways. Coatsworth noted that Mexican railways diminished transaction costs and produced enormous social savings to the economy (especially in comparison with preexisting means of transport). He contended nevertheless that the combination of the export orientation of the Porfirian economy and a deferential railway grid had hampered the possibility of developing a competitive industrial plant (Fogel 1964; Fishlow 1965).

Sandra Kuntz Ficker has authored a monograph on the Ferrocarriles Central Mexicano (FCM) and has coedited with Paolo Riguzzi a collection on Mexican railways, both of which implicitly set out to reconsider Coatsworth's theses. Both studies turn the conventional wisdom about Mexican railroads on its head. Rather than assume that the railroad triggered economic growth, Kuntz Ficker and her colleagues view the relationship between railway and market as mutually reciprocal and ask not just what the railroad did for the economy but what the market meant for the railroad.

Empresa extranjera y mercado interno: El Ferrocarril Central Mexicano, 1880–1907 is arguably the most comprehensive analysis of any Mexican railway company to date. Kuntz Ficker had ample reason to focus on the FCM, which linked Mexico City to El Paso via the key urban centers of Monterrey, Guadalajara, and Tampico. It was the largest private enterprise in Mexico prior to the revolution, employing more workers than any other concern. By 1890 the company was operating more than three thousand kilometers of track (one-third of the entire national railway system at the time). This economic and business history is steeped in primary research in

company records of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe (the U.S.-based owners of the FCM) as well as in regional and national archives. The book is a revised version of Kuntz Ficker's doctoral thesis at El Colegio.

Kuntz Ficker concedes the export orientation of the railway and recognizes how it served the interests of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe, but she argues that the railway also contributed significantly to creating internal markets. She even attempts to resurrect Díaz's maligned image as a *vendepatria* who sold out Mexican sovereignty in negotiating concessions with British and U.S. railway investors. Although Kuntz Ficker argues that Díaz cut better deals than Juárez had, the comparison is a bit forced in that Juárez's meager contracts pale in comparison with Don Porfirio's extensive program of railway building.

The politics of railway rates are analyzed extensively in *Empresa extranjera y mercado interno*. It is surprising to learn that the rates did not favor exporters or even the long-distance shipment of goods. Yet they favored the shipment of minerals over other goods, as Coatsworth argued. Drawing on the work of Mario Cerutti, Kuntz Ficker contends that the export of minerals spawned modest forward linkages, as unrefined ores were sent to Mexican refineries before exiting the country (Cerutti 1992). Qualifying Coatsworth's thesis, Kuntz Ficker argues that the ripple effects created by the FCM encouraged modest industrialization, urbanization, and modernization. Although a national integrated market was never realized during the Porfiriato, certain state capitals and regions became formidable spheres of influence. As Kuntz Ficker makes clear, however, the railroad was not a universal success story. While certain cities and regions flourished (such as Tampico, Coahuila, and the Valle de México), other areas (especially Zacatecas and Guanajuato) declined as a result of the reorganization of the mining sector and the inability of these regions to modernize. Her data suggest that the railway helped develop the northern region and assisted the center, which already had markets in place. In general, the more modern sectors of the economy received the most benefits from the introduction of the railway. Finally, Kuntz Ficker investigates the FCM's serious fiscal difficulties. Despite the railway's success in stimulating productivity, she argues, it was mainly the depreciation of silver that undermined the company's ability to turn a profit. Kuntz Ficker downplays company mismanagement and fierce competition from other railway companies.

It is difficult to quarrel with the impressive statistical apparatus that Kuntz Ficker has assembled. Future studies of competing railway companies are needed nonetheless to test her conclusions about the formation of regional and subregional markets. Some may wonder whether Kuntz Ficker goes too far in exonerating the company, Díaz, and his ministers from more blame for the FCM's recurring problems, but *Empresa extranjera* proves its thesis and successfully explores the dialectical relationship among railways, export sectors, and domestic markets.

The companion anthology, *Ferrocarriles y vida económica en México (1850–1950): Del surgimiento tardío al decaimiento precoz*, brings together the work of a number of economic and railway historians interested in fleshing out why Mexico was so late in responding to the railroad boom and why its hundred-year heyday proved so short-lived. Paolo Riguzzi's synthetic essay, "Los caminos del atraso," explains brilliantly why Mexico could not complete its first railway until 1873 (from Mexico City to Veracruz) and why it did not catch up with other Latin American countries in this category until the 1880s and 1890s. Picking up where Coatsworth's "Obstacles to Economic Growth" left off, Riguzzi takes as a given the interpretation that Mexico's delay was caused by a combination of the nation's poor economic performance during the first fifty years after independence and the seemingly endless political and military strife that wracked the country. But he digs deeper, coming to the conclusion that Mexican elites simply did not catch railway fever. Often Mexicans invested in railroads not because they were committed to staking a claim in the economic future of the country but because companies solicited money through lotteries. Some 93 percent of all concessions failed between 1850 and 1876 because Mexican elites preferred to invest abroad (capital flight is apparently a longstanding Mexican tradition). Native entrepreneurs were more comfortable with short-term investments and partnerships. Riguzzi contends that politicians were the ones who pushed investment in the iron horse, not the private sector. Here Riguzzi may be missing the point. In some regions of Mexico, it is not always easy to separate the politicians from the entrepreneurs during this period.

An array of factors hamstrung efforts to jump-start rail construction: a general distaste for technological and organizational innovation, the stagnation and poor performance of the iron and steel sector, regional political rivalries, and the fear that Mexico might surrender its national sovereignty to U.S. railway companies. Additional factors were the absence of key institutional props, such as the paucity of national laws (a code of commerce and a code of mining were not instituted until 1884) and ambiguous legal structures. Riguzzi further notes that the deplorable condition of the nation's road network, the obstructionist efforts of muleteers and cart drivers who resisted innovation, and the general reluctance of landowners and municipalities all combined to impede acceptance of the iron horse. Railway construction did not take off until the Porfirian state seized the initiative by providing hefty subventions to encourage British and U.S. investment and by promoting the development of the North.

The anthology also includes several empirical studies of the relationship between economic growth and railway politics. Kuntz Ficker picks up where her monograph leaves off in an essay entitled "Ferrocarriles y mercado." She concludes that despite the rate wars among competing railway companies during the 1890s and the political and economic inter-

ests they served, Porfirian tariff policy did not hamper the railroad's efforts to trigger the development of regional markets.

In an intriguing contribution, Arturo Grunstein Dickter offers a portrait of railway politics that traces the evolution of Porfirian efforts to regulate competition. Grunstein Dickter is more critical of the railway companies than Kuntz Ficker, accepting merchant claims of corruption and negligence. He also details the intense territorial rivalries between the FCM and the Ferrocarril Nacional. This oligopolistic competition encouraged a marked tendency for these companies to move in and eventually overwhelm smaller railway companies. Grunstein Dickter extends his essay up to the Porfirian nationalization of the railway system in 1908. He concludes that Treasury Secretary José Limantour's decision to bail out the bankrupt system, eliminate price wars, and improve efficiency was an overreaction that proved damaging to Mexico's long-term economic development. Grunstein Dickter may be right about the long run, but he fails to take into account the considerable pressures that Limantour was under during the Panic of 1907 and his few realistic options. Limantour did not single out the railways for special consideration, rescuing a number of banks throughout the country during the panic.

Coatsworth's long shadow reappears in "Hecho en México," a contribution to *Ferrocarriles y vida económica en México* by Guillermo Guajardo Soto. He argues that Mexican railways created forward linkages for intermediate products, such as rails, but that Mexican steel could not compete with imports for large capital goods. As a result, the Mexican railway system had no major impact on industrialization before the 1950s.

In a collaborative essay, Kuntz Ficker and Riguzzi trace the reasons for the internal and external decline of the railway system. Mexico was the only Latin American country whose railway grid was built largely by U.S. companies. The Mexican Revolution and World War I disrupted foreign investment and combined with greater government regulation to restrict foreign investment. Unlike the rest of Latin America, where railway systems continued to grow until the 1940s, Mexican railways regressed after the Porfiriato. Postrevolutionary presidents were concerned with building railways only in their home states. All these factors contributed to the railways' demise: not until 1937 did railway cargo reattain late-Porfirian levels. Kuntz Ficker and Riguzzi argue that the railways' decline predated the boom in automobile and truck transport by two decades. They conclude that the government decision to support auto transport reflected more the railroads' inability to resolve their problems than a preference for one mode of transportation over another.

Taken together, these studies of late-nineteenth-century Mexico demonstrate that this generation of historians is now thinking and writing about the Restored Republic and the Porfiriato independently of the Mexican Revolution. This small sample, which cuts across social, cultural, polit-

ical, diplomatic, regional, and economic history, also suggests that Mexicanists are not pigeonholing themselves nor rushing to embrace au courant trends in the field. Except for the railway historians, the authors of these studies are reluctant to engage other works in the field, let alone speak to each other. The railway historians and Tenorio-Trillo are unquestionably the most eager to compare the Mexican trajectory with similar developments in other parts of Latin America, the United States, and Europe. Until scholars reach the point where these kinds of conversations are more commonplace, until historians of the late nineteenth century think more broadly about their work, and until Mexicanists are more aggressive in drawing comparisons with other Latin American societies, it will be difficult to generalize about these two periods and synthesize these case studies into a larger analytical framework. In the meantime, we are richer for these thoughtful contributions to our understanding of Mexican society in the late nineteenth century.

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