ARGENTINA:
A Hundred and Fifty Years of Democratic Praxis

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BETWEEN REVOLUTION AND THE BALLOT BOX: THE ORIGINS OF THE ARGENTINE RADICAL PARTY IN THE 1890s. By Paula Alonso. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp. 242. $52.95 cloth.)
POOR PEOPLE'S POLITICS: PERONIST SURVIVAL NETWORKS AND THE LEGACY OF EVITA. By Javier Auyero. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000. Pp. 271. $54.95 cloth, $18.95 paper.)
CONTENTIOUS LIVES: TWO ARGENTINE WOMEN, TWO PROTESTS, AND THE QUEST FOR RECOGNITION. By Javier Auyero. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002. Pp. 248. $18.95 paper.)
PATRIOTAS, COSMOPOLITAS Y NACIONALISTAS: LA CONSTRUCCIÓN DE LA NACIONALIDAD ARGENTINA A FINES DEL SIGLO XIX. By Lilia Ana Bertoni. (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica de Argentina, 2001. Pp. 319. N.p.)
THE LANDOWNERS OF THE ARGENTINE PAMPAS: A SOCIAL AND POLITICAL HISTORY, 1860–1945. By Roy Hora. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001. Pp. 264. $70.00 cloth.)
ARGENTINA: A SHORT HISTORY. By Colin M. Lewis. (Oxford, UK: One World Publications, 2002. N.p.)
WORKERS OR CITIZENS: DEMOCRACY AND IDENTITY IN ROSARIO, ARGENTINA (1912–1930). By Matthew B. Karush. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002. Pp.272. N.p.)
A HISTORY OF ARGENTINA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. By Luis Alberto Romero. Translated by James P. Brennan. (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002. Pp. 349. $60.00 cloth, $22.50 paper.)

The workings of democracy dominate the current writing on Argentina. By making democracy its centerpiece, the impressive synthesis of the twentieth-century history of Argentina by Luis Alberto Romero exemplifies the genre. Romero starts his book with the democratic election of Radical leader Hipólito Yrigoyen as president in 1916 and

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concludes it with the overthrow of another elected Radical, Fernando de la Rúa, in 2001. Other recently published authors address historical topics that fall between the *revolución de julio* of 1890 and the *revolución de septiembre* of 1930. The former movement was meant to impose democracy and the latter to overthrow it. Paula Alonso and Matthew Karush brandish the word democracy or a synonym in their titles. Roy Hora and Lilia Ana Bertoni frame their inquiries into power and citizenship from quasi-democratic perspectives of inclusiveness and participation. Colin M. Lewis, an economic historian, employs a context of long-term development to examine the giddy rise and the disastrous fall of the democracy of the 1990s built on privatization and a convertible currency. Two books by sociologist Javier Auyero explore democracy among the poor in its contrasting present-day forms.

Several of these works explore the relationship between power and social class. Hora, for example, emphasizes the disparity between the high social status of the pampas landowners and their low political power. He questions the standard interpretation of the late nineteenth-century Argentine State as a landowning oligarchy, in which social prestige and political power became coterminous. Writing on the early years of the Radical Party in the 1890s, Alonso argues that the aspiration to democracy did not arise from a quest for something new, but as nostalgia among members of an established elite for a form of politics that died long before 1890. Democracy became a means to protect social status. Bertoni analyzes the efforts of upper class opinion makers in the 1880s and 1890s to use patriotic symbols to forge a sense of national identity in a society of immigrants. Her work broadens a subject usually viewed from the single perspective of using voting rights for political containment and social control. Karush's study documents the attempts of politicians in Rosario to use democracy to build a stronger sense of equal citizenship and to undermine and supersede class loyalties among workers. Romero's book includes discussions of grass-roots party organization. He stresses the importance of the *comités* under the post-1912 Radicals and of the *unidades básicas* under the post-1943 Peronists. Lewis replaces the old term "oligarchy" with the fashionable expression "political class" (in Spanish, *la clase política*) to portray professional politicians as a self-serving sect or caste divorced from society. He is suggesting that late twentieth-century politics replicated the abuses against democracy characterizing the late nineteenth. Auyero ventures into the shantytowns of Greater Buenos Aires and into the displaced populations of the provinces. His first book examines the problem-solving networks of modern Peronism and his second book the situations where such networks have failed.

Patronage, clientage, and political bosses—democracy in its debased or corrupt forms—recur as other persistent themes of these studies. The

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village power brokers of rural Buenos Aires of 1870–1900, as described by Hora, performed the same functions as the local bosses of Greater Buenos Aires in the early 1990s, as analyzed by Auyero. Traffickers in favors and perquisites are known in local argot as *caudillos de barrio*, *jefes electorales*, *politiqueros*, and latterly *manzaneras* (referring to the *manzana*, or city block). Such brokers have operated in the province of Buenos Aires probably since the suffrage laws of the early 1820s. Throughout the provinces, appointed justices of the peace and police commissars evolved as government agents. They controlled elections and outmaneuvered or quashed opposition groups. In other provinces, district prefects (*jefes políticos*) discharged similar roles. By the 1870s, party networks based on local political leaders were spreading across the country. In the Partido Autonomista Nacional (called the PAN), long dominated by President Julio A. Roca, the party machine functioned hierarchically. The president controlled provincial politics through so-called Governor-Electors (*gobernadores electores*), who in turn orchestrated the local bosses. Under Yrigoyen after 1916, patronage became a major item of public spending. Patronage in excess played a large part in the eventual downfall of democracy when opposition to the spendthrift Radicals helped to provoke the military coup of 1930. As Romero notes, a similar but more modestly proportioned system recurred in 1932–1943 under the conservative coalition known as the Concordancia that replaced Radical government.

The bosses and the political machines developed as appendages and epiphenomena of the liberal regimes (conservative and Radical) dominating Argentina until the revolution of 1943. Machine politics grew less obtrusive from 1943 to 1983 when liberal representative institutions weakened. Under Juan Perón (1943–1955), the union bosses and other Peronist apparatchiks displaced the geographically distributed local party caudillos. A cornerstone of social justice as conceived and practiced by Perón, the Eva Perón Foundation concentrated many functions of the old-fashioned machines in the hands of the president's wife. Traditional machine politics also remained hidden under the military dictators from 1955. The dictators banned political parties, disrupted all forms of political organization, and renounced extensive linkages with civil society. The machine system revived after the fall of the dictatorship in 1983. Its importance by the 1990s reflected the breakup of the state-dominated society that resulted from Carlos Menem's privatization policy. Writing about the early 1990s, Auyero dwells on the importance of female political bosses. The bleach-blonde cameo impersonations of Eva Perón provided basic services to the poor in return for political support. In this period, myriad grass-roots functionaries became vital to the government by procuring the consent of the poor to the sweeping programs of neoliberal reform.

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The machines and the local bosses tied the political entrepreneurs to their electoral clients in fictive kinship ties that weakened loyalties based on class and interest groups. The machines isolated and individualized members of the electorate. They tempered demands from below and enabled political systems to operate in top-down or paternalistic forms. They provided the poor with food, medicine, and festivities as charity, but these benefits never became entitlements. The largesse of the bosses became surrogates for social reform long denounced by the Socialist Party as sops to the masses—"bread and circuses." They combined some of the hallowed practices of the Church with a minimalist outlook toward the care of the poor reminiscent of flint-eyed nineteenth-century liberals.

The organization and activities of the party machines suggest striking parallels between the eras of liberalism before 1943 and neoliberalism after 1989. The powerful provincial governors of the late nineteenth century, who managed elections under the PAN, resembled the Peronist governors, who endorsed Menem and helped to bring down de la Rúa in 2001. The term "league of governors," an expression first employed in the 1870s to describe the provincial alliances to support the president, returned to vogue in the 1990s. During the economic recession of 1913–1917, the subsidized foods provided by the Radical Party bosses and the *comités*, known as *pan radical* and *carne radical*, attracted popular support, headed off dissent, and helped to protect stability. The Peronist party apparatus played an analogous role during the recession of 2002 when President Eduardo Duhalde deployed emergency subsidies to contain a nation-wide protest against mass unemployment and falling living standards.

The book by Luis Alberto Romero book revises his *Breve Historia Contemporánea,* first published in 1994. Romero's account of twentieth-century Argentine history shows interpretative skill, strong personal commitment, and freedom from the bigotry or tendentiousness of many of his predecessors. In the current version of the book (well translated by James P. Brennan), Romero has continued his story into early 2002 by sketching the calamitous decline and collapse of the neoliberal state of the 1990s. Here, the discussion of the party machines concentrates largely on the Radical governments of 1916–1930. The author mentions Yrigoyen's campaign to nationalize petroleum in 1927, often cited by the Radicals as an example of his progressive nationalism. As Romero shows, the oil campaign is better interpreted as an attempt to monopolize natural resources and to create new sources of patronage. The Radicals promised new resources to an insatiable middle class, but allowed democracy to flounder in corruption.

Romero addresses mainstream topics like urban social formation and agricultural and industrial development. He displays great expertise on cultural and social development in the inter-war period, but his

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original decision to start his book in 1916 leads him to neglect some nineteenth-century themes that resonated long into the twentieth century. Such themes include regional interactions and the functions of presidential patronage in linking the provinces with Buenos Aires. He overlooks points of similarity between the old liberalism and the new. Missing too are other examples of late nineteenth-century issues relevant to later periods. The 1990s economic boom and collapse in Argentina, for example, has instructive parallels (and contrasts) with the 1880s foreign investment boom ending in the Baring crisis of 1890. Romero might therefore have dealt more fully with the period 1870–1916, which marked the formation of the liberal state, to create a fuller perspective on the 1990s, the era of the neoliberal state. He lacks a full appreciation of the provinces' role in the nation's political development. He exemplifies a common bias of *porteño* historians, for whom Buenos Aires always stands out as the centerpiece.

Romero makes scathing critiques of the totalitarian trends of the early 1950s under Perón and the authoritarian swings of military governments afterwards. He writes with particular eloquence on the 1970s, which saw the resurgence and the collapse of the Peronist movement (1973–1976) and the tyranny that styled itself the Process of National Reorganization (1976–1983). He provides an excellent description of the brief regeneration of Peronism. Its salient events included the return of Perón to Argentina from Spanish exile in 1972 and again in 1973. Then followed his reelection in 1973 and death in 1974 and the gross misrule of his widow, Isabel Perón in 1974–1976. On the "Process," Romero's restraint intensifies his indictment of a regime that tortured and killed its enemies, real and supposed, with frenzied zeal and sent thousands, including Romero himself, into exile. He emphasizes correctly the affinities between the economic policies of José A. Martínez de Hoz under the Process in the 1970s and of Domingo Cavallo under Menem in the 1990s. The two ministers strove to create a market economy and to suppress the system of state intervention and state ownership largely set up by Perón in 1943–1955. Cavallo proved more successful than Martínez de Hoz, although both policies collapsed in recession and bankruptcy.

Of the monographic works on the period 1870–1930, the study of the pampas landowners by Roy Hora stands out as a model of clarity and skill. In questioning the existence of the late nineteenth-century landed oligarchy, the author propounds a thesis of striking originality. He adduces strong—but not quite convincing—evidence to support his claim. Hora notes that the pampas landowners differed from some European prototypes of gentry, such as the landed class of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England, which enjoyed the deference of an underling rural population. On the pampas, landowners and country dwellers lived physically separated from each other, leaving the landowners with few

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opportunities to develop a system of patriarchal control. As a result, party bosses, who were not large landowners, emerged to dominate the villagers and small farmers of the pampas. Hora argues that the great landowners of Buenos Aires figured rarely among the upper echelons of the PAN and possessed little common identity. They were often city dwellers, and therefore absentee landowners, who pursued secondary careers as merchants, lawyers, or soldiers. Hora documents the landowners' two failed efforts to build an independent power base—in the Unión Provincial in the early 1890s and the Defensa Rural around 1910. Such failure highlighted the gulf between the landowners and the party bosses who controlled their electoral clients. The author notes some change after World War I as the politicians and the landowners grew closer together, but suggests the term *landed oligarchy* applies accurately to the 1930s alone.

Hora writes impeccably, displaying imagination and originality. He has assembled some fascinating data and has created an unparalleled view of local elections and rural clientage in the late nineteenth century. His work discredits many shibboleths. Still, his picture remains incomplete and his conclusions debatable. He lacks full proof to support his challenging general thesis. He might have dwelt more closely on the post-independence period of 1820–1850 under Bernardino Rivadavia and Juan Manuel de Rosas for the origins of the political bosses and of the developing separation between gentry and rural dwellers. He analyzes the province of Buenos Aires alone, not the country as a whole or even the pampas, despite his chosen title. He extrapolates from that province into broader venues, where conditions differed. In more underdeveloped provincial societies beyond Buenos Aires, landed oligarchy remained a norm throughout the era of the PAN. Rightly, Hora denies the existence of the landed oligarchy in Buenos Aires; wrongly, he rejects "the entrenched assumption of a close unity between large landowners and the state" (4) in Argentina as a whole.

Hora questions the characterization of the political system of Buenos Aires as a landed oligarchy, but then understates the role of the Buenos Aires landowners in the PAN. The term *Autonomista* in the label Partido Autonomista Nacional referred to the Autonomist Party of Buenos Aires, a group with strong rural associations supported by numerous local landowners. Leading members of the landed classes did not usually serve as officials or local bosses in the Autonomist Party, but that party reflected fully their opinions and interests on economic, financial, and frontier policy. Led for many years by Adolfo Alsina, the Autonomists dominated the provincial government of Buenos Aires and the national government until his death in 1877. In the 1880s, the wealth and social standing of the landowners increased, but their political power declined. Such divergence, however, remained temporary. The declining power of the

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landowners circa 1877–1895 had several causes. Divergence reflected the temporary weakness of the Autonomist faction after Alsina's death; it followed the defeat of the province of Buenos Aires in the rebellion of 1880, and the power shift to the other provinces during the presidencies of Roca (1880–1886) and Miguel Juárez Celman (1886–1890). Around the mid-1890s conditions resembling the 1870s returned when Carlos Pellegrini, one of the old Autonomists, established a firm niche like Alsina's in the PAN. The rise of Pellegrini re-enhanced the Buenos Aires landowners' power. Hora's discussion lacks a full description of Pellegrini's power base. Nevertheless, he defines Pellegrini as a figure "popular among landowners" (116). The argument stressing the political weakness of the Buenos Aires landowners is accurate for the 1880s, but not for the preceding or the subsequent decades. The landowners of Buenos Aires commanded prestige, influence, and power for much of the late nineteenth century, although never to the point that the landed class and the state achieved true unity as an oligarchy.

Paula Alonso's study of the early Radicals is a spirited and meticulous attempt to revise and deepen knowledge on some well known but imperfectly studied subjects. Around one third of her book deals with the administration of Juárez Celman, who presided over an economic and political debacle in 1886–1890 as did Fernando de la Rúa in 1999–2001. Adeptly, Alonso disentangles the competing factions of the PAN. She narrates the colorful history of the rebellion of 1890, which was fought in the streets of the national capital, and its complicated sequels of 1893 in the provinces led by Buenos Aires and Santa Fe. Among the latter uprisings, the best known episode occurred in Santa Fe in September–October 1893, when government troops and provincial militia killed some immigrant farmers who participated in an insurrection under the Radicals.

Alonso dissects the careers of the famous Radicals. They included the quixotic Leandro N. Alem, a man reminiscent of the romantic French revolutionaries of 1830 or 1848. Second loomed the calculating Hipólito Yrigoyen, the dour and intensely driven nephew of Alem, who became a towering figure until his fall from the presidency in September 1930. Third was Bernardo de Irigoyen, a perennial contender for the presidency, whose youthful association with Rosas, the *homo horribilis* of liberal Argentina, barred his election. As one of the foremost landed grandees of the late nineteenth century, "Don Bernardo" epitomized the linkages between power and land that Roy Hora has attempted to discredit. Alonso examines the salient ideas of the Radicals in some original ways. She argues that among the early Radicals, the term "revolution" upheld its literal meaning of returning to the point of origin. Their revolution was intended to revive a democracy that had once existed but since died. Later segments of the book deal with the Radicals' 1894 switch

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of strategy from revolt to electoral participation. The author illustrates the vitality and competitiveness of elections in the mid-1890s, seeking to challenge received ideas of unchecked fraud and the untrammeled power wielded by Roca following the rebellion of 1890.

On one hand, Alonso has unearthed new data from Argentine and British archives. Her narrative on the 1890 rebellion is exceptionally strong. She explicates the so-called *acuerdo* of 1891, a short-lived political deal between Roca and Bartolomé Mitre. Under the *acuerdo*, the elections of 1892 would enable Mitre to return to the presidency he had formerly occupied in 1862–1868 but Roca would reconstitute his power in the provinces. On the other hand, the book suffers from an exclusive focus on the 1890s. If, for example, the Radicals' "revolution" meant returning to the past, to which past were they referring? To answer that question, Alonso needs to have addressed more fully the politics of Buenos Aires in the 1860s and 1870s. At that time, at the height of a struggle for dominance between Alsina and Mitre, turbulent urban gang warfare prevailed. Ignoring all their excesses, the Radicals called such factional tournaments a democracy and demanded they be restored. The birth of Radicalism in 1891 resembled the formation of Autonomism in 1861–1863. Both parties came into existence following a split in their parent entities, the Partido Liberal of the early 1860s and the Unión Cívica of the early 1890s.

Lilia Ana Bertoni's study addresses issues of building citizenship and inculcating loyalty to the state. The author analyzes the political and cultural impact of European immigration in the 1880s and of European militarist and nationalist ideas in the 1890s. She draws most of her material from the Italian communities in Argentina at the time. In the 1880s, some of the resident Italians incurred disfavor with the Argentine authorities. They were accused of founding schools that taught in Italian rather than Spanish, raising the specter of the state within the state. In Rome, a parliamentary deputy urged that overseas territories occupied by Italian "colonies" should be annexed, causing paranoid reactions in Argentina. The late 1880s marked campaigns to accelerate cultural homogeneity. Reformers wanted to eliminate foreign schools and to impose "patriotic" teaching in public school curricula. Of the two objectives, the former failed and the latter succeeded. Henceforward, schoolchildren engaged in daily rituals of raising the flag, a pledge of allegiance, and singing the national anthem.

The 1890s—a richer, more complex, and interesting decade than the 1880s—brought to Argentina a spin-off of Italian national assertiveness in relations with Austria-Hungary and Italian imperialist ventures in North Africa. Other Western European trends or controversies provided models in Argentina. The French aspirations to regain Alsace and Lorraine after the Franco-Prussian war prompted displays of imitative

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chauvinism in Argentina. They included the formation of the *batallones infantiles*, the so-called battalions of children arrayed in military uniform who marched through the streets bearing firearms. German militarism played some part in the introduction of physical education in the schools.

As well as an excellent analytic contribution, Bertoni's book is a major bibliographic work that provides a profusion of data on provincial and local history. The author explores the creation of national monuments, museums, and patriotic holidays. She examines the army reform of 1901, led by General Pablo Ricchieri, and notes how campaigns against truancy became linked with efforts to eradicate diphtheria. She evaluates Argentina's influence in the odious ethnic nationalism purveyed by Gustave Le Bon and the welling of anti-Americanism in Buenos Aires following the 1898 war with Spain. She includes informative snippets like Roca's decree of 1884, which determined that the army alone could display the Argentine flag bearing an insignia of the sun. She adds to a discussion that has developed recently in Argentina on the origins of the liberal and nationalist schools of historical research at the end of the nineteenth century. Bertoni weighs in on political history by analyzing the debates on the naturalization of immigrants. She evaluates the outlook of prominent elite figures like Estanislao Zeballos and Indalecio Gómez, who emerged later as champions of the democratic electoral reform of 1912. She makes a very important point that the elite's fear of the immigrants later sublimated into support for democracy as the preferred method to build nationality and citizenship.

Bertoni might have devoted more space to the 1890s boundary dispute with Chile. Italian concepts of territoriality influenced bellicose attitudes toward Chile and strengthened efforts to consolidate national unity through the assimilation of immigrants. War mongering against Chile led newspapers like *La Prensa* toward the tawdry jingoism of William Randolph Hearst or Lord Northcliffe of the British *Daily Mail*. During the "armed peace" with Chile, Zeballos, Gómez, and Roque Sáenz Peña, (the principal author of the 1912 electoral reform), launched "patriotic" organizations that foreshadowed various demagogic and quasi-fascist movements in the twentieth century. Lastly, Bertoni might have considered how Argentines responded to the crisis in South Africa leading up to the Anglo-Boer war of 1899–1902. In South Africa, where the Boers confronted the "Uitlanders," natives and foreigners became similarly counter-posed as in Argentina. Despite government repression against anarchist unions and organizers in 1901–1910, the absence of deeper conflict suggests that Argentina enjoyed relative success in mastering the challenges of mass immigration.

The book by Matthew Karush shares an important connection with Bertoni's analysis that links the outlook on immigration with later

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attitudes toward electoral reform. According to Karush, "elite Argentine politicians turned to democracy in response to a crisis of national identity brought on by massive immigration and violent class conflict" (2). Following Bertoni, he argues that early twentieth-century Argentines started to support democracy not only to erase foreign, but also class, allegiances. He refers to such ideas as "Visions of a Non-pluralist Democracy." In Rosario after 1912, Radical Party organizers sought to induce workers into a "unified nation of virtuous citizens" (10). The author might have explored the linkages between national unity and citizenship further. His ideas suggest new insights into conceptions of democracy among the luminaries of democratic change such as Sáenz Peña and Yrigoyen. Sáenz Peña posed a vision of "organic" democracy to refashion Argentina into a paradigm of stability, individual opportunity, and social mobility. His confidence that democracy would subvert the dogmas of class conflict cherished by Socialists echoed the thesis proposed by Karush. The rambling, metaphysical discourse of Yrigoyen exemplified similar trust in the regenerative power of democracy. According to an Yrigoyen manifesto of 1906, "clean elections" would construct a nation "breathing in the fullness of its being and spreading its vitality to the common good." Several years before the franchise law of 1912, known as the Ley Sáenz Peña, Yrigoyen posed a non-pluralist notion of citizenship and national unity in the form of a one-party state led by the Unión Cívica Radical. As president, he struggled to bring his idiosyncratic notions to fulfillment. Yrigoyenismo collapsed in 1930 amidst charges by his enemies that Yrigoyen had sought to erect a regime of popular authoritarianism that they called *plebiscitarian caesarism*.

Karush writes interestingly on strikes, labor, and working-class politics in Rosario during World War I. For the Argentine working class, wartime conditions provoked inflation and acute disturbance in the labor market. The overall pattern in Rosario varied only in detail from Buenos Aires where unrest climaxed in the mass strike and in the heavy repression of January 1919 known as the *Semana Trágica*. Compared with Buenos Aires, working-class society appeared less stable in Rosario; the Socialist Party was weaker, and the Anarchists were stronger. Attempts by local bosses to enlist workers' support in Rosario began following the Radicals' victory in the gubernatorial elections of 1912, the first held under the democratic Ley Sáenz Peña. On the Radicals of Santa Fe, Karush highlights the career of Ricardo Caballero, who for twenty years assumed the mantle of workers' champion. Embellishing the discourse that placed citizenship before class, Caballero appealed to workers as heirs of autochthonous creole tradition. By trying to manipulate the outcome of strikes, however, he exacerbated rather than erased class conflict and discredited democracy.

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Colin Lewis is known for his 1983 study of the British-owned railways in Argentina from 1860 until 1914. His new *Short History* traces the hapless economic decline of Argentina during the past half century. For several decades, Lewis has kept abreast of current affairs in Argentina, blending research and teaching successfully. He has created a fresh narrative from a large secondary literature. Three sections of the book analyze Argentina from international, economic, and political perspectives respectively. The high points of the book include an excellent historical sketch of the so-called belle époque of the pre-1914 era and a study of economic policy from the mid-1970s, from Martínez de Hoz to Cavallo.

Lewis displays wide knowledge and impressive technical skill, but his book merits some criticism. In the economic discussion (for instance, on the foreign debt issue and the Austral plan of the 1980s), causal interrelationships are at times difficult to follow. He relies excessively on the term "political class," denoting an insensitive and oppressive ruling class, which is a journalistic cliché rather than a valid analytical concept. He applies the label indiscriminately to the Menem government of 1989–1999 and the Alliance administration of 1999–2001. With the notion of the corrupt elite as his anchor, he arrives at a similarly distorted and unsympathetic interpretation of the "Argentine case" as the International Monetary Fund. Until late 2001, the IMF granted loans to Argentina with excessive laxity but then canceled all lending abruptly, leaving the country to slide farther into a catastrophic depression. For Lewis, a profligate ruling class caused the escalating crises of 1998–2003, which moved from severe unemployment to extreme political instability and virtual social breakdown. He writes as if all along the way a sure and easy road to salvation lay at hand by reducing government expenditure. He asks "Did the political class have the stomach for root and branch fiscal reform? Could the political class contain its appetite for self-discretionary financing?" (175) He writes that because of "the institutional corruption of the political class . . . it was clear that a balanced budget was undeliverable" (176). According to Lewis, "To a very large degree, corruption drove the deficit" (171).

Disaster stemmed from conditions of greater complexity than the corrupt machinations of an inner sanctum or cabal, the well-known moral atrophy and incompetence of Menem, Cavallo, and De la Rúa. Lewis exaggerates government expenditure as the driving force of the crisis while misrepresenting the extent to which failure to reduce expenditures became a deliberate policy. He fails to consider the effects of social pressures from below on expenditure, as unemployment climbed during the 1990s. He overlooks the point that inelastic expenditure reflected an effort to keep democracy alive while society crumbled. He devotes too little discussion to the international scenario of the late 1990s, which induced capital flight and falling export earnings, and drove down

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government revenues. The root causes of the crisis lay in the broader policies of the 1990s rather than in the moral failings of political leaders. The policies included root and branch privatization, which drove up unemployment. Currency convertibility introduced by Cavallo in 1991 became a deflationary straitjacket, reminiscent of the impact of the gold standard after 1929. The central government devolved responsibilities for education and public health on the provinces, but failed to provide a sufficient or consistent flow of provincial revenue. In the late 1990s, a hostile external environment sparked by rising interest rates in the United States provoked a contraction of capital imports and foreign markets.

Javier Auyero provides a fuller picture of the social forces of the 1990s that influenced government expenditures. In *Poor People's Politics*, Auyero writes about conditions in the metropolitan shantytowns; in *Contentious Lives*, he turns to the effects of poverty in the outer provinces. The two books tell a sorry story of mass destitution and desperation against a background of unemployment, deindustrialization, and regressive income distribution. *Poor People's Politics* explains how Menem and provincial governors like Duhalde in Buenos Aires maintained political stability in the midst of social upheaval. In essence, they employed the party machines to preserve a low-cost democracy. The machines reached down to the masses, suborned their loyalties, and restrained their rebellious impulses. Auyero's extensive fieldwork enables him to describe in unrivalled detail the functioning of patronage and clientage among the impoverished. He shows how the party bosses distributed subsidized foods, clothing, medicine, and sometimes supplies of marijuana. Higher up the chain of clientage relations in Buenos Aires, "Chiche" Duhalde, the governor's wife, created a network of subsidies to the masses she called *evitismo*, after Eva Perón. Like the machine politicians of the past, the Peronist party brokers trafficked in public offices. They exploited the devolution of education to the provinces to cram party sympathizers into the schools as "teachers." Auyero writes about the system with an awareness of its potential for hypocrisy, exploitation, and waste while recognizing that it provided the only means to preserve the simulacrum of popular and democratic participation.

Contentious Lives analyzes two popular protest movements in Argentina in December 1993 and June 1996. They occurred in Santiago del Estero and Neuquén, two provinces to the north and to the south of Buenos Aires respectively. In the former movement known as the *santiagazo*, the protesters assaulted and burned the State House (and a priceless provincial archive), the Legislature, and several homes of leading politicians. The latter movement, called the *pueblada*, occurred in the adjacent towns of Cutral-cu and Plaza Huincul. On this occasion, insurgents known as *piqueteros* formed barricades to block the flow of traffic from the cities. The two movements stemmed from the steep

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contraction of the public sector during the early years of Menem's administration. Rising unemployment and collapsing incomes caused by spending cuts and privatization had a disproportionate impact in the provinces of the interior. The *santiagazo* erupted as a reaction to unpaid wages and pensions and to political corruption. The *pueblada* followed the privatization of YPF (Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales), the state oil company, which resulted in massive local layoffs.

Auyero has written another original and compelling book, which like its predecessor, deserves to become widely known among students and scholars. His work on the shantytowns illustrated the role of the brokers and machines of the Peronist Party in the political containment of the poor. That work showed how Menem kept his political support while he intensified poverty and unemployment. Auyero's second book focuses on the leaders of novel forms of direct democracy. The *pueblada*, in particular, exemplified a form of protest that grew increasingly common throughout Argentina from the mid-1990s. As economic crisis deepened, *piqueteros* sprang up en masse. In 2001, as de la Rúa tottered toward his fall, demonstrations of marching women banging pots and pans, called the *cacerolazo*s, and spontaneous neighborhood associations known as *asociaciones populares*, added to the clamor.

As in *Poor People's Politics*, Auyero stresses the significance of female political leaders. His account of the *santiagazo* is written around the life history of "Nana," court employee and former carnival dancer; and that of the *pueblada* is written around Laura Padilla, a divorced single mother. In *Contentious Lives*, he attempts to show, not quite plausibly, how the personal history of the participant shapes the content of protest. Thus he claims that for Nana the burning of public buildings resembled the iconoclastic rituals of the carnival; by joining the riot, she was reliving one her favorite activities. More persuasively, he notes that Padilla tried to steer the *pueblada* away from violence, which, as a victim of domestic abuse, she deplored. According to Auyero, the quest for food and jobs brought about by the destruction of the state sector occupied a secondary position in the movements. Like Perón's *descamisados* of the 1940s, the protagonists' priorities lay in the quest for *dignidad*, meaning self-respect, as against purely material gains.

Auyero's multivariate sources include extensive interviews. Direct access to participants stands out as an advantage enjoyed by the sociologists working on contemporary issues against the historians confined to the archival documentation. Nevertheless, contrasting methodologies on the morphology of rebellion often yield similar conclusions. The *manzaneras* in the shantytowns of today are recognizable as the *caudillos de barrio* who worked the slums of Buenos Aires known as the *conventillos* a century ago. In Santiago del Estero, Auyero draws attention to the "carnival atmosphere" of the riot. The same phenomenon became visible in

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many past movements, from the 1875 burning of a Buenos Aires seminary by anticlerical immigrants to the 1969–1973 urban insurrections headed by the *cordobazo* of May 1969. Accusations against "professional agitators" in the 1990s had direct parallels in reactions to the strikes of 1900–1920, which were blamed on Anarchist or Bolshevik instigators. Women's activism stands out as the most striking novel feature of recent movements.

The books reviewed here illustrate a recent pronounced shift away from interest in the military, authoritarianism, and populism—the topics that dominated the agenda between 1943 and 1983. Similarly, the absorption with Perón and corporatism seems close to exhaustion at last. The recent research reveals many points of similarity in democratic praxis throughout the history of Argentina since independence. Still more research promises to deepen knowledge of regional issues in the development of Argentina and to provide better perspective on the role of the provinces in the development of the national polity. Such research will also provide new insight into intermediate leadership and patronage relations, which stand out among the principal features of Argentina's political culture. A closer look at democracy will cast new light on authoritarianism. As we examine in microcosm the ties between patrons and clients, we shall continue to find many points of convergence between democratic and authoritarian systems.

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