MEXICO, SO CLOSE TO THE UNITED STATES: Unconventional Views of the Nineteenth Century

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HACIENDAS OF MEXICO: AN ARTIST'S RECORD. By Paul Alexander Bartlett. (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1990. Pp. 126. $29.95 cloth.)

IN MEXICAN PRISONS: THE JOURNAL OF EDUARD HARKORT, 1832–1834. Translated and edited by Louis E. Brister. (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1986. Pp. 194. $23.50.)

THE EAGLE: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF SANTA ANNA. Edited by Ann Fears Crawford. (Austin, Tex.: State House Press, 1988. Pp. 299. $21.95 cloth, $12.95 paper.)

LA SEMILLA EN EL SURCO: ADALBERTO TEJEDA Y EL RADICALISMO EN VERACRUZ (1883–1960). By Romana Falcón and Soledad García Morales. (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1986. Pp. 411.)

DE CANTON DE TEPIC A ESTADO DE NAYARIT, 1810–1940. By Jean Meyer. (Mexico City: Centre d'Etudes Mexicaines et Centramericaines, 1990. Pp. 293.)

THE MEXICAN WAR: JOURNAL AND LETTERS OF RALPH W. KIRKHAM. Edited by Robert Ryal Miller. (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1991. Pp. 141. $34.50 cloth.)

LIFE IN MEXICO UNDER SANTA ANNA, 1822–1855. By Ruth R. Olivera and Liliane Crété. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991. Pp. 264. $24.95 cloth.)

THE EXPULSION OF MEXICO'S SPANIARDS, 1821–1836. By Harold Dane Sims. (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990. Pp. 277. $42.00 cloth.)

Mexico occupied a sizable area on the shelves of U.S. libraries even before the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). No other country in the Western Hemisphere receives as much attention from English-language readers as the United States' neighbor to the south, which perhaps accounts for the profusion of Mexicanists among Latin Americanists. Proof can be found in dozens of places, including the potpourri of books to be reviewed in this article. Everything from line drawings of haciendas to prison reminiscences to Santa Anna's memoirs

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can be found and read without mastering a syllable of Spanish. A comparable embarrassment of riches exists for few other countries in the world. One result of this largesse is a great variety in quality, ranging from translations of the sublime *True History of the Conquest of New Spain* by Bernal Díaz del Castillo to potboilers such as *Aztecs* by Gary Jennings. Most of them have something to offer, as is true of the volumes on this list as well.

The books under review here offer their readers differing views of Mexico. That multiplicity reflects boundless U.S. interest in things Mexican (despite Mexicans' assertions to the contrary) as well as the richness of the country. Some of these books lovingly depict haciendas, while others report on agrarian workers who want to dismantle them. Some works under review study the expulsions of foreigners, while others record the impressions of foreigners arriving. There are books in this grouping that will be consulted fifty years from now, and others likely to be forgotten.

Haciendas of Mexico: An Artist's Record is a remarkable book in many ways, and one whose virtues can only grow with time. Paul Alexander Bartlett began sketching and photographing Mexican haciendas in the 1940s, and although his works reflect a considerably different style, they are comparable with Frederick Catherwood's historic renderings of the Maya ruins found by John Lloyd Stephens a century before. As Professor Gisela von Wobeser of the Universidad Autónoma de México, points out in her excellent introduction, many of the fifty-nine haciendas depicted here, from Sonora to Yucatán, were built during the Porfiriato (1876–1911), although some date from the colonial period or the early nineteenth century. Their range in size and style is startling—no two shown here are much alike. The photographs are equally lovely and, to my mind, even more evocative. Fine diners will particularly enjoy seeing the Hacienda de los Morales before it was transformed into one of the best restaurants in Mexico City. I only wish that Bartlett had supplied dates with his photographs. But why quibble? He offers in this volume much more than a pictorial record of a vanished world, including basic commentaries on hacienda life that are readily accessible to students. The book would make an excellent companion assignment to John Kenneth Turner's *Barbarous Mexico,* for example. *Haciendas of Mexico* could also provide illustrations for a book-length study of rural life in an individual state or the economy of a particular hacienda. The entire collection of drawings and photographs, reflecting the life's work of a man with a Mexican soul, is housed at the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection of the University of Texas at Austin and also at the Western History Research Center of the University of Wyoming in Laramie.

In one instance, Bartlett provides a rendering taken from an 1868 bank bond showing a shrine of sorts (p. 108). I had never before seen the

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Hacienda de Manga de Clavo in Veracruz, the place where Antonio López de Santa Anna rested from his labors as president of Mexico. Its lavish appearance complete with statues is surprising, albeit proof positive of his notorious peculations. Four of the books under review here have something to do with Santa Anna, testimony to his ongoing identification in the U.S. public's mind with Mexico. A prominent historian of nineteenth-century Mexico recently remarked to me that he hoped that the chronicle of that epoch could soon be rendered without reference to Santa Anna. Yet these volumes in English show that while Mexicans and historians of Mexico have progressed away from the lingering fascination with "the enigma that was Mexico" (as he was dubbed by a previous biographer, Wilfrid Hardy Callcott), the broad public in the United States and even those who should know better have not.

Part of that predicament stems from an "analytical" style in which history was identified with a particular person. Although U.S. readers, I think, have gotten away from studies in the mold of "the United States in the Age of Lincoln" (with the conspicuous exception of Gore Vidal), they still cling to that pattern with respect to foreign countries. For example, experts on Russia can be found on television continually pleading for U.S. policy makers to look beyond Mikhail Gorbachev and now Boris Yeltsin. One explanation is that it is easier to conceive of a nation's politics in terms of a single individual. But doing so diminishes the level of complexity in an unacceptable and often false way, much like equating the Cliffs Notes version to the unabridged classic that it oversimplifies. Now that we have entered the "Age of NAFTA," such a view of Mexico is truly counterproductive.

Thanks to the kind of coincidences that historians love, Prussian-born Eduard Harkort was intimately involved in Santa Anna's first campaign for power. In December 1827, Harkort went to Mexico as chief director of the reduction works in the silver mines of the British-owned Mexican Company in Oaxaca. He resigned from that firm in 1832 to join the Mexican forces fighting with Santa Anna in opposition to the president of Mexico, Anastasio Bustamante. *In Mexican Prisons: The Journal of Eduard Harkort, 1832–1834* (a translation by Louis Brister of Harkort's *Aus Mejicanischen Gefangnissen*) discusses the mining engineer's harrowing experiences in the Perote jail and in Puebla after he and his fellow officers were captured by troops loyal to Bustamante on 3 March 1832. In August the intrepid Prussian managed to escape and rejoined Santa Anna's forces as lieutenant colonel of engineers and artillery. By 28 December, when that diary ends, Harkort was looking forward to his triumphal entrance with Santa Anna into Mexico City.

Harkort's subsequent life was also eventful. As foreshadowed by sentiments expressed in his diary, Harkort broke with his general when Santa Anna supported the foes of his own vice president, Valentín Gómez

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Farías, and abandoned the federalist Constitution of 1824. The Prussian then joined those fighting for federalism in Zacatecas and was captured in May 1835, confined in Perote once more, and deported on October 1835 as an undesirable alien. He entered the United States in November and hooked up with some old federalist partisans in New Orleans who introduced him to Stephen Austin. Soon after, he met Sam Houston (through the good offices of his friend Lorenzo de Zavala) and was appointed "principal engineer of the army." He died on 11 August 1836, probably of yellow fever, while supervising construction of the fortifications at Galveston Island.

Harkort's diary is filled with luscious details about major figures of the period. Santa Anna is portrayed as a "youthful, enterprising spirit, charming personality, and generous liberal character," and his nemesis, cacique and future president Juan Alvarez, as "a blind but nevertheless eager patriot." *In Mexican Prisons* also features Harkort's observations about Indians, priests, and the Mexican countryside. Although many commentaries by foreigners in Mexico have been published, this diary distinguishes itself from those because of Harkort's first-hand involvement in the political and military events of the day. Brister has done a fine job as editor in providing additional material.

In Mexican Prisons also fills in the huge gaps found in *The Eagle: The Autobiography of Santa Anna,* which first appeared in English in 1966 and is reviewed here in its second edition. Santa Anna finished this reminiscence in 1874, shortly before he returned to Mexico after being pardoned by Benito Juárez's successors. By then, Santa Anna was eighty years old, crippled, and half-blind. It is ironic yet fitting that this volume should have been published by State House Press in Austin, because the legend of Santa Anna has been kept alive in the United States in large part because of his role in the struggle for Texas independence. Editor Ann Fears Crawford begins her preface to the new edition by noting, "No man was more a reflection of his times and of his surroundings than Antonio López de Santa Anna" (p. ix). In viewing "the General" (as Harkort referred to him) as somehow the personification of Mexico, Crawford casts the saga of Texas independence as the victory of noble (Protestant) virtue over vicious but congenial (Catholic) evil. How else to explain why such a dated volume has been reprinted intact twenty years after its original publication, except to reinforce such views among Texans? Magnifying the importance of Santa Anna makes the martyrdom of William Travis and Jim Bowie at the Alamo and Sam Houston's victory at the battle of San Jacinto even more legendary.

The Eagle is filled with errors that are hard to explain. For example, the headings for Chapters Nine and Ten read "My Return to Power (1850–1853)" and "Revolution—Exile Again (1853–1855)," while the text correctly places Santa Anna's ascension to the presidency in 1853 and his

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ouster in 1855. Further, the editor does not clarify statements or identify important figures for the reader. Although potentially an interesting document for the study of Anglo-Texans relations with Tejanos, *The Eagle* has no value to anyone seriously interested in studying Mexico during "the Age of Santa Anna."

Robert Ryal Miller's *The Mexican War Journal and Letters of Ralph W. Kirkham* also deals with Santa Anna, if only tangentially, but it represents a new source on the U.S. perspective of the war with Mexico that changed the future of both countries. A New Englander, Kirkham graduated from West Point in 1842 and was assigned first to Fort Niagara and then to the Oklahoma territory. In 1847 he joined General Winfield Scott's Army of Occupation following its landing in Veracruz as adjutant general of the Sixth Infantry Regiment and flutist in the U.S. Army Band. Like Harkort, Kirkham was a keen observer, and he saw much more of Mexican life than his position as enemy soldier might suggest. Fortunately for historians, he was only five months into a happy marriage when called to Mexico, and he therefore recorded everything he heard and saw to share with his beloved Kate. For example, he and two hundred soldiers were quartered in Manga de Clavo, by then stripped of most of its furniture. Kirkham commented often on Mexican flora and birds and quickly fell in love with Mounts Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl. Yet his opinion of most Mexicans was low, and he shared the typical Yankee prejudice against Catholicism and priests. Unfortunately, much of the journal and letters is taken up with spiritual matters, interesting perhaps to a historian of religion or social life but distracting to a Latin Americanist. Kirkham's information about the battles for Mexico City is interesting nevertheless, particularly when he describes how Santa Anna was almost taken prisoner. Then too, Kirkham regales his reader with tales of the occupation of the city, a subject that historians on both sides of the border have generally shied away from for obvious reasons. Finally, Kirkham recorded his trek with five other U.S. officers to the summit and crater of Popocatepetl, almost eighteen thousand feet above sea level. According to Miller, they were the first U.S. citizens to climb that glorious peak. Although *The Mexican War* is no match for the Harkort volume and Miller does not supply a profusion of informative notes as does Brister, this work will be helpful when historians and political scientists get around to reevaluating the Mexican-American War.

In contrast, books like *Life in Mexico under Santa Anna, 1822–1855* by Ruth Olivera and Liliane Crété seem calculated to infuriate those who have devoted much of their scholarly lives to studying the Mexican Republic prior to the Reform. Clearly the volume was conceived to fit into the series on daily life in various U.S. states by Crété, who also wrote *La Femme au temps de Scarlett: Les Américaines au 19e siècle* (Paris, 1990). The most obvious problem is the title. As noted above, Santa Anna came to

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power in 1832, not 1822, and held it himself only a short while. He did not dominate those years nor the ones he spent out of the country while others held sway. Yet according to the preface, "the years from 1822 to 1855 mark the rise and fall of one man . . . , the product and the personification of the period, a figure who returned again and again to power, in one guise or another, rising renewed from his ashes like the mythical Phoenix of the Arabian desert" (p. ix). Given that characterization, it comes as no surprise that the authors cite *The Eagle* as a source on many occasions.

Life in Mexico under Santa Anna consists of snippets from a wide range of travelers' accounts and other primary material. As to the secondary accounts, they are mostly textbooks or works concentrating on the colonial period. No mention is made of Silvia Arrom's work on Mexican women (a natural for a book like this) nor that of Coatsworth or Rodríguez on the Mexican economy.[1] Further, what can one think of a work that attempts to look at political life without reference to the "vampires of the treasury," the ubiquitous moneylenders? Although Doña Fanny Calderón de la Barca is much cited here, readers would be better advised to curl up with the original—*Life in Mexico: The Letters of Fanny Calderón de la Barca,* with its superb editing and annotations by Howard and Marion Hall Fisher—a double masterpiece, rather than this pale *Life* with its lack of analysis and strung-together quotations.[2]

When Mexican daily life is approached in this way, many highly significant phenomena go unnoticed. One of the most defining series of events of the years following independence concerned the fate of the human reminders of the colonial order—the Spaniards or *gachupines.* As carefully depicted by Harold Sims in *The Expulsion of Mexico's Spaniards, 1821–1836,* these immigrants were the victims of successive waves of edicts of expulsion leveled against them by radical politicians.[3] Sims argues that their expulsion drained Mexico of considerable capital, a charge made throughout the nineteenth century. This view was countered by Romeo Flores Caballero in *La contrarrevolución en la independencia,* who claimed that most of the damage had been done before 1810.[4]

1. See Silvia Marina Arrom, *The Women of Mexico City, 1790–1857* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1985); John H. Coatsworth, "Obstacles to Economic Growth in Nineteenth-Century Mexico," *American Historical Review* 83 (1978):80–100; and Jaime E. Rodríguez O., "Down from Colonialism: Mexico's Nineteenth-Century Crisis," in *The Mexican and Mexican American Experience in the Nineteenth Century,* edited by Rodríguez O. (Tempe, Ariz.: Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe, 1989), 7–23.

2. *Life in Mexico: The Letters of Fanny Calderón de la Barca,* edited by Howard and Marion Hall Fisher (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1966).

3. Sims's study, published in 1990 by the University of Pittsburgh Press, won the 1992 prize for best book awarded annually by the Middle Atlantic Council for Latin American Studies (MACLAS).

4. Romeo Flores Caballero, *La contrarrevolución en la independencia* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1969), translated by Jaime E. Rodríguez O. as *Counterrevolution: The Role of the Spaniards in the Independence of Mexico, 1804–1838* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1974).

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Sims also asserts that the Spaniards' expulsion led to the downfall of the first federal republic.

The Expulsion of Mexico's Spaniards should be incorporated into courses on independence movements and immigration because the issues Sims confronts in it are still vivid today as many places in the world struggle to emerge from the burden of colonialism into the realm of self-government. Who has not been chilled on hearing contemporary interviews with the leaders of the Afrikaaner resistance in South Africa? Yet when viewed from a different perspective, exile is a small price to pay in comparison to what happened to unwanted populations in "civilized Western Europe" between 1938 and 1945 or what is currently taking place in the former Yugoslavia.

But the creoles in Latin America faced a different problem than the Ugandans did under Idi Amin or the Black majority does in South Africa today. As has been pointed out by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities,* those who sought to rule in Latin America following independence shared the same culture, religion, language, and often even the same blood as their former oppressors.[5] Although Sims adopts a different perspective, many creoles not only wanted gachupín jobs, they needed to establish their own differences from their European-born kin in order not to be swept out of the country along with them. And although creoles may have felt considerable sadness about the personal cost, Mexicans even today display a notable prejudice against the Spanish-born in their midst and refused until last year to pass a law allowing Mexicans with a foreign-born father to serve as president of the republic (the new law will take effect in the year 2000).

Yet there is even more to the matter than that. Sims notes the argument made by intellectual historian Jesús Reyes Heroles that the expulsions were a by-product of Mexican concerns that the rejected colonial order might be reestablished following independence in republican (or monarchist) guise. But every newly independent nation in the region faced the same problem, and only Mexico chose to solve it by expelling Spaniards. Part of the reason for this distinctly Mexican solution derived from the articulation of "creole nationalism" as a rationale for independence. Beginning in the seventeenth century with the writings of Carlos Sigüenza y Góngora, some intellectuals in New Spain sought to distance themselves from Spanish rule and its "gifts" of Christianity and European civilization. For example, Fray Servando Teresa de Mier posited that knowledge of Christ had come to the New World with Saint Thomas, who was remembered in Mexico as Quetzalcoatl. It was not simply a more egalitarian system that some Mexicans longed for under self-rule

5. Benedict R. O. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* revised and expanded edition (London: Verso, 1991).

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but the right to assert the validity of their national heritage and take control over their own intellectual agenda. This view of the national past did not permit oppressors to continue to live in a world where everyone, regardless of race, considered himself or herself part of the oppressed.

The issue of Spanish expulsion was one of many that led to intensification of differences between various groups as Mexican politics became more dangerous. During these years, two former presidents, Agustín de Iturbide and Vicente Guerrero, were both assassinated, and the more repressive administration of General Anastasio Bustamante came to power. But historians must keep in mind that conflicts affecting the center of Mexico did not necessarily resound in the countryside and vice versa.

The final two studies under review discuss regions on or near Mexico's Pacific and Atlantic Coasts, important areas that are only now receiving something of their just due. After completing his superb work on the Cristero revolt, French-born historian of Mexico Jean Meyer dedicated his research to analyzing the Conservative cacique Manuel Lozada from Nayarit and the Pacific ports of San Blas and Tepic. *De cantón de Tepic a estado de Nayarit, 1810–1940,* fourth in a series prepared by Meyer for the Colección de Documentos para la Historia de Nayarit, is an interesting compilation of state documents from independence to the end of Cardenismo. Relying on a mass of primary materials gathered from twenty-two separate archives, Meyer provides a plethora of diverse data on all aspects of life on the Pacific Coast. Given the importance of these areas during the nineteenth century, it is both strange and unfortunate that so little has been written about the ports of the Pacific. Meyer fills the gap admirably. Virtually everything anyone would want to know about Nayarit can be found in this volume. It includes material on the economy (broadly defined to encompass demography, agriculture, industrialization, and activities at the port of San Blas) as well as the documents focusing on political activities and events from independence up to 1940. Among this information is material on the port of Tepic and the famous incident involving notorious moneylenders Eustaquio Barrón and William Forbes as well as a fascinating chronology by Alicia Hernández Chávez on revolts in the area between 1873 and 1912. The book also contains a section on daily life made up of snippets from the daily press that illustrate various important happenings, like the cholera epidemic of 1850. Thanks to this group of volumes, Nayarit too can provide confirmation of more global theories about political and social movements throughout Mexico.

The last book under review, *La semilla en el surco: Adalberto Tejeda y el radicalismo en Veracruz, 1883–1960* by Romana Falcón and Soledad García Morales, reflects the trend toward regional history that has become the norm in Mexico since Luis González y González published his semi-

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nal work, *Pueblo en vilo: microhistoria de San José de Gracia* (1972). Falcón and García Morales blend the *microhistoria* championed by González with the biography of a "great man," Adalberto Tejeda, one of the leaders of Mexican *agrarianismo. La semilla en el surco* illustrates the importance of this type of analysis, particularly when focused steadily on an era and a place.

That approach is particularly relevant when trying to explain the development of someone like Tejeda, whom the authors describe as "deeply influenced by his familial roots, (on one side) by the Indian village of Chicontepec, religious, poor, and isolated that he knew from his mother's little store, as much as from the economic and political weight of the Tejeda family in Jalacingo and the way that family exercised its authority" (p. 31). Falcón and García Morales are right to emphasize Tejeda's roots because his life stands in counterdistinction to a more common nineteenth-century pattern in which the subject is almost completely deracinated, as happened to Benito Juárez and Porfirio Díaz. Tejeda too had his chance when he went to Mexico City to study engineering, but he returned home to Chicontepec. Even so, Tejeda the person often gets lost in Tejeda the political actor.

Because of its emphasis on regional history as well as on Tejeda's life, *La semilla en el surco* is also valuable for the light it sheds on this important region. Readers meet revolutionaries and counterrevolutionaries who seem to have come from similar backgrounds, and the authors show how contact with them and with the Indians of the Huasteca helped form Tejeda's views on agrarian affairs. A strong supporter of Alvaro Obregón, Tejeda went on to become governor of the state of Veracruz (1920–1924), then Secretario de Communicaciones y Obras Públicas (1924–1925), and then Secretario de Gobernación under Plutarco Elías Calles (1925–1928). Tejeda implemented Calles's anticlerical campaign and was even attacked violently when leaving the Palacio de Gobierno in Jalapa. Falcón and García Morales's depiction of state-supported anticlericalism in Veracruz is graphic and gripping.

When Tejeda returned to office as governor of Veracruz in 1928, he began to implement some of his agrarian ideas. As Falcón and García Morales convincingly show, Tejeda's idealistic vision of power—that it comes not from the military but from popular organizations—limited his leverage when struggling with *hacendados,* as did the geographic variety in the state of Veracruz. In this regard, Tejeda suffered from the noble Left's ambivalence toward any but the most honorable use of power. Yet perhaps there were other reasons as well. The political turbulence occasioned by Obregón's assassination led not only to greater conservatism by Calles in Mexico City but to more rebelliousness in the ranks. As depicted in this study, Tejeda had to contend with many distractions in the form of various political rivals, which stole time from the movement

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he had championed. In 1934 Tejeda was considered a candidate for the presidency but lost out to Lázaro Cárdenas, who later sent him to Europe in various capacities. While there, Tejeda the engineer helped recruit German technicians to come to Mexico to help improve its educational programs, and he also represented his country in civil-war-torn Spain. He handled all his assignments admirably and apparently without complaint. It is only through works like *La semilla en el surco* that historians learn about the complicated political life of postrevolutionary Mexico, which was battling not simply the "normal difficulties" of Third World nations but was also trying to sort through the ideological potpourri that marked that turbulent period worldwide.

As these works demonstrate abundantly, Mexico is a highly complicated nation with great geographical and historical variety. It is to be hoped that the profusion of works in English on that country will only whet readers' appetites for the growing number of studies written in Spanish.

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