

LATIN AMERICAN LONGUES DURÉES

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GOODS, POWER, HISTORY: LATIN AMERICA'S MATERIAL CULTURE. By Arnold J. Bauer. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Pp. 245. \$59.95 cloth, \$17.95 paper.)

MEXICAN PHOENIX: OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE: IMAGE AND TRADITION ACROSS FIVE CENTURIES. By David A. Brading (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Pp. 444. \$34.95 cloth.)

PARA UNA HISTORIA DE AMÉRICA. VOL. 1. LAS ESTRUCTURAS. Edited by Marcello Carmagnani, Alicia Hernández Chávez, and Ruggiero Romano. (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1999. Pp. 570. \$139.50 pesos mejicanos paper.)

IMAGES AT WAR: MEXICO FROM COLUMBUS TO BLADE RUNNER (1492–2019). By Serge Gruzinski. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001. Pp. 284. \$59.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.)

LA MINERÍA MEXICANA DE LA COLONIA AL SIGLO XX. By Inés Herrera Canales, ed. (Mexico: Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luís Mora, 1998. Pp. 271.)

DEEP MEXICO, SILENT MEXICO: AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF NATIONALISM. By Claudio Lomnitz. (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 2001. Pp. 392. \$63.95 cloth, \$22.95 paper.)

THE SWEAT OF THEIR BROW: A HISTORY OF WORK IN LATIN AMERICA. By David J. McCreery. (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2000. Pp. 209. \$61.95 cloth.)

THE WORLD THAT TRADE CREATED: SOCIETY, CULTURE, AND THE WORLD ECONOMY, 1400 TO THE PRESENT. By Kenneth Pomeranz and Steven Topik. (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1999. Pp. 256. \$34.95 cloth.)

THE LETTERED CITY. By Angel Rama. Edited and translated by John Charles Chasteen. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996. Pp. 141. \$34.95 cloth, \$14.95 paper.)

INTRODUCTION

For as long as Latin American writers have been reflecting on the region, they have turned to deep-seated cultural, political, and material

histories to account for the apparently singular blend of upheaval and continuity. Octavio Paz's 1950 meditations in *The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico* are perhaps the most famous reflections in a long tradition of writing about traditionalism. However, in recent decades historians have shied away from such expansive analysis. Perhaps it was the death of "dependency" approaches as the prominent way to tackle durable material legacies. Maybe cultural "traditions" smacked too much of essentialism—a blanket no-no in a scholarly mood that bristled at the mention of fixed identities. Whatever the reason, it became unfashionable to posit theories about Latin American historical trajectories over the very long-run.

Now the *longue durée* is back. Fernand Braudel and the French Annales school were not the founders of the notion that structures can have histories, but they did give it currency. Braudel was especially insightful because he argued that history stretched over the very long-run did not imply a static, unchanging past—but rather advocated an approach that balanced stable equilibrium with conjunctural disequilibrium. The return to the very long-run in Latin America is not a belated embrace of Braudelian history. Latin Americanists were, in any event, more open to French historiography than Anglo-Americans ever were. It could be argued that this turn reflects a revival of Latin American historiographic traditions. Going back to Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude* was an ethereal account of how the Mexican past developed a continuity out of discontinuity, of how each cycle of history destroyed its antecedents, only to rebuild its foundations. The books under review represent a return to the idea that Latin America has durable histories, but with one important caveat: durability need not mean stability or stasis.

Implicit in this idea that the *longue durée* need not be static are two ways of dealing with the very long-run. Both of these are apparent in these books. One examines how societies, economies and polities laid down their substrates at certain pivotal moments of history and created the geomorphic foundations for shifting landscapes over the centuries. These shifts can be momentous or minor—but nonetheless conform to underlying structures that are so tacit that they are all but invisible. Another approach is more evolutionary, which examines change over time, but at a pace that is drawn out over centuries of adaptation to local and global forces. Change of this sort implies that Latin American societies of the early twenty-first century bear some resemblance to their origins, but are not immune to pressures to change. Whether the accent is on the fundamental heritages descended from a formative moment (a geological model), or on the process of adaptive change (an evolutionary model), or an effort to balance both, the books reviewed here have gone back to a tradition of studying, even deconstructing, traditionalism.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Very long-run history often pays close attention to human adaptation to physical environments. Of late, very long-run histories have gone to lengths to show how humans shape their environments. The secular pace, and circular motion, of change is no less true of Latin America. After all, European biota more than any other external force remapped the human landscape of the Americas. Indeed, as the edited volume by Marcello Carmagnani, Alicia Hernández Chávez, and Ruggiero Romano argues, physical geography—to begin with the sheer scale and ecological diversity of the region encompassed by two empires—created challenges and opportunities that no other European powers encountered. As Pedro Cunill Grau shows in his very long opening essay, humans shaped the physical landscape that shaped them. For a fine survey of the idea that there were specific environmental contexts, including natural, human, and cultural resources adapted to the milieu, one could hardly imagine a better place for readers to begin than with the essays in *Para una historia de América. Vol. 1 Las estructuras*. Later chapters by Romano and Carmagnani show how economies and social formations emerged from the landscape—and their essays provide fine examples of human evolutionary models of historical change, less through natural selection than through strategies of social adaptation. For instance, the spatial variation of demographic cycles contoured many of the social and economic models that emerged over time. The pace and process of the “repopulating” of the Americas animated long-term economic cycles and social organization. In a sense, this book is the most Braudelian of the lot reviewed here, examining the gradual accretion of practices of daily life by adapting to the physical world.

But very long-run histories need not restrict themselves to pre-conscious, if still cognitive, adaptive activity. There is a tradition too of writing cultural *longues durées*, describing how mythmaking shaped consciousness over long periods of time. Both David Brading and Serge Gruzinski’s books are examples of how the conquest, and especially its spiritual dimensions, created the cultural substructures for colonial and post-colonial developments. Both are illustrations of how traditions can have histories.

David Brading’s majestic, learned, and beautiful book, *Mexican Phoenix: Our Lady of Guadalupe: Image and Tradition across Five Centuries* is proof of how cultural traditions, derived from a formative moment, can be constituted out of a genealogy of doctrinal interpretation, discord, and consensus which add up to an especially Mexican (and to a lesser extent Latin American) devotional culture. Brading, one of the world’s foremost historians of Mexico, challenges the conventional accounts of modern nationalism as a rupture from sacred to profane public

cultures. Rather, nationalism can flourish in part because of its sacred roots, not in spite of them. *Mexican Phoenix* makes the case that a medieval tradition created the cultural substrate for modern Mexico. For five centuries, this medieval legacy evolved and matured so that the Virgin of Guadalupe culminated in the 1990s as the patron saint of the New World.

This tradition balanced local and universal aspirations. The Virgin, nurtured by her origins in a 1531 vision by a humble Indian on the outskirts of Mexico City in the wake of the Spanish conquest, was also driven by a universal mission to revitalize the ancient Church and transmit its message to heretics and non-believers worldwide. In this fashion, the Virgin was constantly invoked as provincial pioneer in the making of a new Rome, free of Old World intrusions from Protestants and Muslims, while being the miraculous exemplar of God's concern for the world's most humble dwellers. This is precisely why creole preachers from 1661 to 1767 referred to Guadalupe as a "Mexican Phoenix" in the image of Greek Fathers seeking new moral foundations for the universe.

For Brading, the Guadalupan tradition had medieval roots in Christian practices in which signs could become the objects of devotion, and a kind of theology based on typological reasoning (drawn from St. Augustine) which created a tradition for debating the meaning and significance of signs and apparitions. Mexico gave this medieval combination some fertile grounds, for just as the Spanish demolished the Aztec empire in the New World, the Old World was embroiled in a deep struggle over the status of icons and the veneration of saints. In the Mexico of sweeping conversion efforts, the urge for physical manifestations of the divine were too hard to suppress and too instrumental for a process of spiritual conquest. Ever since, New Spain and its believers, according to the Virgin's champions, could exemplify a deeper faith in a more universal mission. Through hagiographers like Miguel Sánchez and Luis Lasso de la Vega, Brading explores the twists and turns of the making and maturing of this "tradition" down to the fascinating account of the official coronation in 1895, at the height of the Porfiriato, of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Brading's traditional subject operates within a tradition that treats "Mexico" in comparatively integrated terms. Not so Gruzinski, for whom the myth of a patriotic tradition is a cover for deep conflict. More than conflict: war. Like Brading, signs are at the center of Gruzinski's *longue durée*. In a sense, Brading and Gruzinski exemplify the different ways in which cultural histories of the very long-run can be deployed—using even similar materials, down to the very same images. Readers tempted to think that the *longue durée* yields only monochromatic history should read these two books back to back. The texts and sermons

that drive Brading's narrative give way to the autonomous power of the social imaginary, or *imaginaire* (the cultural elements by which we construct understandings of the social world) in Gruzinski.

Gruzinski's punch line is that Spanish colonization was and is an ongoing process creating a hybrid postmodern society long before there was any modernity to transcend. It is worth saying up front that some readers will wonder whether the imaginary is the product of clashing cultures or the terrain in which the conflict is conducted. Some obscure language and theoretical flights don't help the cause for clarity. Still, the brilliance and originality cannot be denied. Effecting the material and physical conquest of the Americas required, from the outset, colonization, not through words (which were incomprehensible for the most part), but through images—which is how the New and Old Hispanic worlds actually converged. Conversion through images fit with the Counter-Reformationist drive of Spanish colonizers. What was iconoclastic in parts of Europe was instrumental in America. Images, icons, and signs thereby became the means by which colonizers tried to control their subjects, and the instruments through which the colonized resisted, reconstructed, and reconstrued their own symbolic worlds.

Making images work was a constant source of frustration for Europeans. From the Caribbean battles over *cemies* to the eighteenth-century "Indianization" of Guadalupe, images of colonialism did not always cooperate with their masters. Throughout the warring, what was constant was the effort to impose and destroy while misappropriating, leading finally to deep misunderstanding on all sides. For instance, the Nahua *ixiptla* was useful for Franciscans who grasped indigenous icons with an eye to making them serve evangelical purposes by renaming them "saints." But the semblances did not work very well. For all the efforts to contain him, the devil found ways to take over the images that Indians were supposed to embrace, constantly infuriating the European zealots who were forced to smash the idols they thought they could control. Here were two worlds separated by a chasm of common but mutually subverting images. Thus, what emerged over the *longue durée* was a baroque hybrid, exemplified by the Virgin of Guadalupe herself, that combined but also separated mestizo and native worlds into a conflictual synthesis that would distinguish Mexico and Latin America from the modern refraction of Protestant Anglo-America. The baroque *imaginaires* of New Spain aggregated into diverse expressions of a social world comprised of numerous peoples belonging to a single stratified viceroyalty, with roots that endured through the Enlightenment and modernity, only to be revitalized—if not mainstreamed—in the post-modern world of Televisa.

Gruzinski's worlds clash more than Brading's. But they nonetheless give rise to a synthesis capable of accommodating the clash. This

synthesis is not the same as a consensus, but is more instead like a coexistence of the multiple peoples and ethnicities of Mexico, brought together now in a “neo-baroque” common ground which was predicated on cultural pluralism and recurring misunderstanding. Important differences aside, Brading’s creole consensus and Gruzinski’s baroque synthesis share more than just a similar concern for the spiritual history of Mexico, but a concern to excavate the deep roots of Mexican, and to some extent Latin American, nationhood. For both, the long-term imaginings were the products of image production and diffusion.

GOING FOR BAROQUE

The *longues durées* of Gruzinski and Brading show how the structures of the imagination can have histories. But if signs and images are foundations of sacred cultures, other historians examine the continuity of words in the making of more profane traditions. Both Claudio Lomnitz and Angel Rama accent the place of the written word, and authors, at the center of their cultural histories of Latin American traditionalism. Both these books are examples not of the geological models, where foundational substructures determine the contours of later traditions, but are illustrations of a more evolutionary path of how cultural structures develop and mature through selective adaptation. Claudio Lomnitz’s collection of essays, *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico*, represents a “historical sociology of Mexican national space” and explores the ways in which the steady accumulation of languages, rituals, presidential cults, and especially the intervention of intellectuals formed habits of politics and power. His subject is not the pre-modern foundations of the present, but the complex and contradictory nature of the modern experience itself.

Lomnitz’s anthology is a collage with an overall impact reflecting the author’s intention to disaggregate what Brading and Gruzinski tend to portray as a common (if conflictual) space: the Mexican nation. Indeed, *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico* separates the parts to show how they fail to assemble into anything quite so overarching. The only exception is the recurring effort—and here is where intellectuals play an important role in the *longue durée*—to create integrative discourses of the nation rooted in a foundational past. Lomnitz’s foil is Benedict Anderson, whose *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (1983) did so much to propagate the idea that nationalism was a modern successor to the idea of the sacred political community. If Anderson argued that nationhood rested on territorial sovereignty and a sense of “deep horizontal comradeship,” Mexico can only appear *manqué*. For over the very long-run, the creole fantasy of integrated nations of citizens transcending ethnic, racial, or regional identities did not emerge.

This was not, as Brading or Gruzinski would possibly argue, because the sacred medieval legacies would not fade so easily, but because modernity in Mexico constantly fractured that which it claimed to fuse. All of the essays play on the theme that the myths of something authentically Mexican, somehow rooted in a “deep” past, are but a patina that cover the fractured affines of kin, ethnic, or local experiences of the modern world. Land and blood, not language, were central components of Spanish and Latin American political ideologies (p. 43). Some of these particular dimensions of public life (explored, for instance, in a marvelous chapter on center and periphery in discourses of Mexican nationalism) go so far as to claim to be “Mexican,” though ironically they could only do so by romanticizing the fringe emblems of the Indian or peasant.

There is an important conceptual point here about the way we tell stories about nationalism or any political tradition. The problem is that modernist writers have tended to argue that the past should be more and more masterable for its subjects to become more and more modern—and hence more compliant with an envisioned world in which men forge a world that transcends historical necessity. As Hannah Arendt once noted, this was what was so revolutionary about the American Revolution—the notion that mankind could start history anew. More than just anew: a world conjured by reason, liberated from the past to inscribe a new story written by men, not nature or God. For Lomnitz, what Mexico and Latin America convey to theories of nationalism are the multiple ways in which the political community can express itself nationally without implying a decisive rupture with the past. Just because religion, kinship, or even clientelist, patriarchal models of politics persist, this does not make Mexico any less “national” as if the history of nationalism over the *longue durée* must conform to a teleology of a universal nation exhausting the cultural space of its subjects. If anything, as Lomnitz suggests in his opening essay, the first real nation was *reconquista* “Spain,” where precocious patriotic talk took hold very early but never claimed to supplant other communitarian ideologies. The idea of modern Spain (or Hispanism) evolved through and not against its particularized parts. Subsequent Enlightenment, Bourbon, and liberal ideologues (Lomnitz argues that Mexico’s Revolutionary apostles followed liberal footsteps in many ways) fashioned general national ideologies to vanquish particularized beliefs, with mixed results. So long as Latin American history is treated as an aberration to modern norms—indeed seen as a continent unable to rid itself of past legacies—it will reproduce the very hierarchy of human histories which portray some societies as endowed with the powers to master themselves, predestined to be truly modern, “real” flag bearers for universalizing nationalisms. Others, meanwhile, remain trapped in the labyrinths of their pasts.

Lomnitz does, however, have a problem on his hands. He deconstructs the ideas and myths that sustain the notion of Mexico, but at the same time concedes that traditions, be they of public cultures or intellectual habits, do nonetheless exist. The author articulates the difficulty of making claims about Mexican or Latin American “difference,” while trying to argue that the very notion of difference is constructed. This theme is central to Angel Rama, whose subject, the *letrados*, are the central mediators of tradition. *The Lettered City* highlights the ways in which the masters of the written word became a traditional force of Latin America’s public life because they, alongside Brading and Gruzinski’s image-peddlers, produced myths of tradition and power. A deep paradox lies at the heart of Rama’s work: *letrados* claim to be proponents of change, but wind up reproducing a seminal condition of Latin American history, which is the power of the city. The two forces, the puissance of the written word and the place of the city over the country, created highly adjustable legacies for the conquest, colonial, and revolutionary societies alike. For all the varieties of mutations of *letrados* in Latin America, beginning with the sacred and secular scribes that surrounded Hernán Cortes (and outlived him) to the revolutionary vanguards of Mexico or Cuba (who also outlived the promises of their respective revolutions), rulers and writers shared a special, often symbiotic relationship that has perpetuated practices of authority in a continent of vast inequalities and injustices. In the persistent urbanism and state power of Latin American history, men of letters play a unique role in the very long-run equipoise of change and continuity.

Why? Influenced by Foucault and Benjamin, Rama argues that systems of power depend on knowledge to perpetuate them. Rama, coming out of a Marxist tradition in the River Plate, revises his own formative intellectual heritage in this work, arguing that writers are not simply transmitters, or executors of an order, but design “the cultural models raised up for public conformity” (22). Citing Antonio de Nebrija’s famous line (not uncoincidentally written in 1492) that “language is the companion of empire” (35), Rama explores the many cumulative ways in which written words invented, crystallized, and consolidated a “stubborn tradition of the colonizing metropolis, conserved in the admiring spirit of its ex-colonies” (83). When all is said and done, writing was an everyday practice of wielding power, not because it had anything in particular to do with enforcing rules, but because writers imagined an order made of rules derived from an idealized model of rational planning. The very first chapter opens with the impulse for an “ordered city” inscribed not just in Platonic principles heralded in the Renaissance, but stemming from a unique historical conjuncture in which Spaniards sought to build a society quite different from the Old World, one which could emerge, centered in its cities, from a blank slate

created by the conquest. As with Marian devotional cults, rationalization found hospitable environments where cities could be mapped out (at least in theory) *de novo*, under the watchful, informed eyes of viceroys and the administrative hierarchies that, like bodies themselves, were held together by arteries flowing with ink. Here was a world, according to Rama, envisioned not as an extension of something old, but a reflection of something entirely futuristic. And *this*, not the backwardness with which it is often conflated, was the colonial mentality that endured through the centuries.

Endurance of models of rationality had as much to do with the elasticity of imagined worlds as with the amorphous nature of the *letrados* themselves. If the conquest yielded to the idea that Iberian empires could create modernizing peripheries according to their minds' eye, the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and Modernism did nothing to shake up the faith in the written word. Far from it. The tradition of the *letrado* was peculiarly adaptive to the intellectual movements that would wash back and forth across the Iberian Atlantic. But endurance depended on more than the elasticity of the tradition itself. The notion of the *letrado* itself expands our understanding of knowledge production beyond the restricted field of "intellectuals." Rama's *letrados* range from notaries, trained in sixteenth-century American universities that filled the "City of Protocols" (chap. 3), to journalists like José Martí, whose "City Revolutionized" by democratizing ideologies (chap. 6) remains as much an ideal today as the baroque fantasy of Iberian colonialism.

Whatever the type, intellectual production was not a purely scholastic affair—but took place in very public settings. Indeed, more than just public, the production of ideas was closely linked to the state and its power holders. The lettered city was, in the end, the modern refraction of a classical image of a *polis* run by an aristocracy not of blood, but of learning. Throughout Rama's breathtaking literary voyage, what was as continuous as the *letrados'* heterogeneity and the multiple forms of ideas of the city and its republics was the proximity of these ideas to power. Viceroys, caudillos, populist republicans, and even revolutionaries in different ways relied upon *letrados* to produce the image of sacred and civic religions that would justify their rule. This fitful partnership between the sword and the pen constituted an enduring legacy of the city of letters.

CIVILIZATION AND ITS CONTENTS

The cultural structures of Iberian America began to sink their roots in the fifteenth century. By the time other Europeans emerged onto the scene, Iberian formations were mature and expansive. As the empires declined, revolutions broke out, and civil wars spread, "traditions" did not wane.

The Latin American *longues durées* did not resemble the upward sloping, modernizing time line that we often associate with whiggish history. But if studying the cultural heritages of the Iberian-American worlds represents a return to, while revising, an older Latin American historiographic vision, material *longues durées* are also back. An equally traditional view of Latin American material cultures viewed the conquest and colonialism as the basis for social and economic relations that endured through the centuries. Gilberto Freyre's study of the Brazilian plantation combined the benevolence of the Christian master with the moxie of the export entrepreneur, to imagine (replete with authoritarian connotations that did not take long to surface) a Brazilian upper class capable of moralizing the market economy. Left-wing alternatives, often described (a little misleadingly) as the progenitors of "dependency" theory, were also circulated in the 1930s. At either end of the spectrum was an emerging portrait of a region whose experience of modernity did not destroy or dismantle the vestiges of the precursors.

David McCreery's *The Sweat of Their Brow* and Kenneth Pomeranz and Steve Topik's *The World That Trade Created* are not explicitly Braudelian, but they do tackle extended time lines of Latin American engagement with the world economy, one through the lens of work, the other trade. Like the four books already reviewed, these two depict deep continuities through disruptive conjunctures. Both books, moreover, tend to see economies that move forward, and mature, without casting off older ways of doing business or getting by.

McCreery's is a short work that defies the recent turn to local case studies of how Latin Americans made a living in tough circumstances. The general argument is clear to the point of excessive simplicity. McCreery balances the exigencies of a world market, which demanded staples and export commodities from Latin America with local circumstances that determined whether workers were able to thwart the most oppressive features of colonial and post-colonial exploitation. But what was unique about Latin America was the bequest of the conquest: the Iberian empires' access to vast natural resources and a native population that could be compelled to work. None of the agents involved was especially interested in creating labor forces composed of wage earners. So, from the start, extra-economic forces shaped the dealings between bosses and workers, which tended to give Latin American economies a certain "feudal" character. This, however, was an appearance as the state (colonial Brazil being the main exception during the centuries of the *donatarios*) took measures to prevent the emergence of an independent landed aristocracy, and the pull of the world market prevented estates from lapsing into entropic self-sufficiency. Workers, too, had a role, sort of. Where they had options, and could eke out material livelihoods beyond the boss's reach, they could bargain on

more favorable terms. But where the options were limited, especially in the sugar belts where imported African slaves predominated, the boss had the upper hand, and he used it, often clenching a whip.

What is continuous, to the present day, is how coercive and oppressive working was. To be sure, McCreery makes room for middling sorts of administrators, pastors and soldiers as workers, but the narrative is mainly about the most downtrodden. As the book reaches its conclusions, it gets exceedingly bleak as the bargaining and resistance came to naught. If McCreery wanted to tell a story of structures prevailing over agency, he succeeded. Chapter four (on the export economies from 1850 to 1930) ends, after observing that occasionally governments took neutral stances or sided with workers. Thus: "More commonly, though, Latin American Liberal regimes beat and shot workers in the interest of a 'good business climate,' and of attracting foreign investment." (143) The failure to consider politics seriously—as if the *longue durée* should be free of messy discontinuities—is not the worst of it. Most troublesome is the tradition of seeing workers only as their bosses saw them, that is as *brazos* for their estates, mines, and factories. Yet historians have been making alternative claims about deep continuities of Latin American capitalism: the dominant form of work in Latin America—household work—is glossed over entirely. Even under the harshest of chattel slavery systems, workers found spaces on the edges to supplement their livings on *conucos* or *roças*. And beyond these repressive hard cores, independent household production was far more the norm than the exception for most Latin Americans from the conquest onwards. If the current levels of unemployment and underemployment are any gauge, this is a tradition that is bound to persist.

Uninterrupted oppression in the shadow of the conquest is clearly one account of materiality of Latin American history, and it has its undeniable appeals. But some of the founding *longue durée* works insisted that the nature and phases of oppression could only be understood in even deeper structures of capital accumulation. Oppression on the periphery was the condition that enabled accumulation. With *The World That Trade Created*, by Pomeranz (a sinologist) and Topik (a Brazilianist), readers are invited to explore (quite literally, since the book can read like a guided tour) how long-distance trade shaped all corners of the world as it created great fortunes. Prospective readers need a few caveats. While this is an entertaining and compelling book, it comprises short, thematic essays that operate as prefaces to a series of vignettes to show how traders and tradees negotiated over goods and spoils. Originally published in a business magazine, these short stories were compiled into a kind of reader in world history that does not place Europe at the center of the world, nor make Europeans the only actors with real agency.

If money made the world go round, it was in the hands of merchants,

later bankers, and eventually industrialists and venture capitalists in search of goods and services on offer from culturally diverse places. Much of *The World That Trade Created* concerns the ways in which traders brought cultures together. The vignettes make the several general points. First, creating trade was not always as Eurocentric as has been assumed. This means that, not only were there autonomous circuits of exchange, especially in Asia, but to some extent in the Americas, but also that European traders adapted to as much as they transformed the trading networks they found. Second, even if Europeans (and later North Americans) had to compel partners to do business (chapter 5 explores the economics of violence), they never fully deprived local states and local merchants—the vital mediators of the world of trading—of their command over the resources to which Europeans struggled for access. Indeed, it was the difficulty mastering the peripheries that compelled Europeans to rely on non-market means to punch open markets that more directly responded to their wishes, as the accounts of the Opium War and the Panama Canal illustrate. The final inference, though it is not explicit, is the distinctiveness of Latin America. No continent in the world was “conquered” as Ibero-America was; none was formally colonized for so long; and none was so inducted, by the logic of conquest and colonialism, into long-distance trading networks. If there was a region shaped by world trade, it was Latin America—elegantly captured in the vignette, inspired by the work of the late Warren Dean, of the fate of Brazil’s Atlantic forest (116–119). In this sense, Latin America was far from a repository of inflexible customs or mired in (to use Mancur Olson’s term) “retardants.” On the contrary, it was open to local and external forces, creating, over the *longue durée*, structures adaptable to models of accumulation that flourished in the centuries of merchant capitalism.

If there was a commodity that founded the myth of El Dorado and the extractive structures that would fund merchant capitalists from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, it was precious metals. The collection of essays compiled by Inés Herrera Canales in *La minería mexicana: de la colonia al siglo XX* offers a series of monographic essays about the motherland of all mother lodes. Each essay examines a case study, focusing mainly on the Bourbon and nineteenth centuries. Unfortunately, no works delve into the “golden age” of silver to enable readers to draw out the longer-term structural histories of mining in Mexico. But what emerges from this collection is not the image of a sector steeped in durable monopolies and throttled by state regulations, though miners did try to control markets and states did intrude with bureaucratic rules and high levies. In the main, the sector was resilient and adaptive enough to conform to the conjunctural shifts of international war, revolution, and civil war. In effect, far from sliding into an irreversible sclerotic

slump, mining reflected the turbulence of its environment. If there was a *longue durée* in Mexican mining, the underlying substrate was not as stable as Braudel's Mediterranean, but went through cyclical upheavals, booms, and declines. Combined, the works of Pomeranz and Topik, and the essays in Herrera Canales's collection reveal cultures and patterns of accumulation that do not fit the Braudelian sedimentary narrative of "countless inherited acts, accumulated pell-mell and repeated time after time" to become the tacit assumptions, the material structures, of everyday life.¹ In the balance between equilibriums and disequilibriums, the theoretical departure for plotting the logics of endurance had to take very, very seriously the historicity of the latter.

But if the Latin American *longues durées* are premised on persistent disequilibriums, what can we say about continuity of material cultures? We have seen how spiritual cultures gave way to contested hybrids with distinctive personalities identifiable from the baroque sixteenth century. Arnold J. Bauer's sweeping yet thoroughly accessible *Goods, Power, History* makes analogous claims about the ways in which "Latin Americans" clothed, fed, and housed themselves. The story is deceptively simple, perhaps because Bauer economizes on words and examples in order to keep his narrative moving at a fast clip through five centuries. But once again, Latin America emerges in the shadow of a formative shock: the conquest, and the struggles to create "colonial" societies to produce a mixture of hybrid material worlds, combining the ways of many cultures. Latin American colonies were not Europoid extensions, like the English "settlements" or the "plantation complexes" of the Caribbean. Rather as meeting and fighting places for Europeans, Africans, and especially Indians: food, clothing and housing exemplified a unique, though not uniform, blend of cultures. *Goods, Power, History* explores the complex ways in which the goods of everyday life, from cochineal to skirts, brought new and old worlds together.

Bauer also echoes the points made by McCreery, Topik, and Pomeranz, and Inés Herrera's collaborators: no *longue durée* history of Latin America makes much sense without confronting power and its inequities. With the centrality of the conquest (Bauer likes the term "invasion") in these narratives, this is hardly surprising. But what Bauer explores is how food, clothing and housing doubled as the mechanisms for creating colonial societies, and the means to mark out differences within colonies. Food, the distinction between those that drank *chicha* and those who sipped wine, those that ate tubers like potatoes and those that ate wheat-floured bread, staked out the differences between

1. Fernand Braudel, *Afterthoughts on Material Civilization and Capitalism*. Translated by Patricia M. Ranum. (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 7.

peoples. The same goes for clothing: wearing rough-woven garments from Mexico's *obrajés* contrasted with the aristocrats sporting imported silks. In effect, through various periods over five centuries, consumption was a means to stratify by creating cultural differences between "ethnic" groups—not just by being able to buy, but by exhibiting one's ability to buy.

Stratification and marking differences, however, did change the region over five centuries. Bauer's Latin America, unlike Braudel's Mediterranean, acquired some traditions, but they should not be confused with stable, tacit, or pre-conscious habits. *Goods, Power, History* is more of an evolutionary tale. Running through Bauer's wonderful book is the dynamic role of "civilizing goods" that transformed the region even as they created enduring structures of material life. Here again, one sees the recursive logic of colonialism and its successors (Bauer calls it neo-colonialism), which tried to adapt Ibero-Americans to the exigencies and stimuli of the Euro-centered world economy, or to borrow Angel Rama's formulation, to conserve in the spirit of the colonies and ex-colonies the projects of the colonizing metropolis. As Bauer notes, this resulted in twists that perpetuated an underlying colonial relationship: in the late eighteenth century for instance, when British shoppers enjoyed the fruits of a "consumer revolution," Andean peasants were forced to buy goods to line the pockets of local authorities. The challenge for liberals was how to transform such a coercive engagement with the market into voluntary participation, or at least to create practices that made the metropolitan-colonial relations appear less contrived from above, a process described vividly in chapter 5 on "modernizing goods." Bauer, like the others reviewed here, captures yet again a variant on the nature of change in the Latin American *longue durée*: old ways, even medieval and pre-colonial ways, accommodated new ways as the centuries unfolded. Friction and resulting change existed, but also a great deal of endurance, reinforcing the images of a premodern "deep" Latin America. If signs and words accomplished this complex pattern, for Bauer it was realized with commodities and the cultural purposes for which they served.

CONCLUSION

Latin American *longues durées* have returned, but shorn of many of the simple tropes about a region forged by conquistadors, anti-modern Hispanism, or encased in resilient feudality. The conquest, and the moment in which the formative encounter of Atlantic worlds took place, did of course create patterns which took centuries to evolve and mature. All of the books reviewed resist timeless portraits of a region whose primary features developed only in response—often seen as a resistant

adaptation—to external forces. On the contrary, internal debates, conflicts, and wars shaped the cultural practices that we now call “tradition” through the centuries.

If these traditions were not accretions of centuries of everyday activity that became the implicit coda by which Latin Americans lived, the authors reviewed here pay close attention to the role that instability and disequilibrium played over the long-run. This suggests a very different understanding of the extended time lines of the region’s history, neither smooth, upward-sloping trends of improvement and perfection, nor of long periods of stasis punctuated by great ruptures like revolutions. Rather, what was continuous was disequilibrium itself, so that it was this confusion, tumult, and enduring imbalance of signs, words, and goods that plotted the trajectories of Latin America over the very long-run.