
REVIEW ESSAYS

POLITICAL IDEAS, POLITICAL CULTURES New Works on the Middle Period in Spanish America

Sarah C. Chambers
University of Minnesota

CHILE: THE MAKING OF A REPUBLIC, 1830–1865: POLITICS AND IDEAS. By Simon Collier. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. 271. \$65.00 cloth.)

TRANSICIÓN Y CULTURA POLÍTICA: DE LA COLONIA AL MÉXICO INDEPENDIENTE. Edited by Cristina Gómez Álvarez and Miguel Soto. (Mexico City: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de UNAM, 2004. Pp. 308.)

THE TIME OF LIBERTY: POPULAR POLITICAL CULTURE IN OAXACA, 1750–1850. By Peter Guardino. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005. Pp. 405. \$84.95 cloth, \$23.95 paper.)

THE PLEBEIAN REPUBLIC: THE HUANTA REBELLION AND THE MAKING OF THE PERUVIAN STATE, 1820–1850. By Cecilia Méndez. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005. Pp. 343. \$84.95 cloth, \$23.95 paper.)

THE CASE OF THE UGLY SUITOR AND OTHER HISTORIES OF LOVE, GENDER, & NATION IN BUENOS AIRES, 1776–1870. By Jeffrey M. Shumway. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005. Pp. 202. \$29.95 paper.)

Twenty years ago, historians of Latin America often lamented that the nineteenth century was a forgotten century. The notable boom in publications over the past two decades on both the early republican

period and more broadly on what has come to be called the “middle period” (from the Bourbon Reforms through the formative decades of nation-state formation) has changed that image dramatically. The books under review represent various currents of that growing historiography. Prior to the 1980s, most histories of the period focused on political events, leaders and ideologies; the first two works considered here continue and advance that tradition. Two others are characteristic of the more recent trend to take seriously popular participation in the political movements and debates of the time. Many scholars following this approach have adopted the concept of “political culture,” defined by Peter Guardino as encompassing both discourses and practices through which “people sought to shape their worlds by influencing or replacing governments” (2). Cecilia Méndez does not explicitly use that term, but analyzes political discourses, resistance, and local social relations as part of an attempt “at gauging the political weight of rural Andean society in the shaping of the national state in Peru” (12).¹ Finally, Jeffrey Shumway’s book fits within an emerging but still quite nascent trend toward conceiving of the realm of politics more broadly still to encompass efforts by states to regulate supposedly “private” lives and the ways in which men and women incorporated the political language of their time into quotidian disputes such as familial conflicts.

Simon Collier was one of the pioneers of English-language scholarship on independence-era Spanish America, and his last book, *Chile: The Making of a Republic, 1830–1865* (published posthumously in 2003) continues a tradition of serious and thoughtful history of political ideas. In the introduction, he acknowledges the works on social history and state formation that have developed in recent decades, but keeps his focus on politics and ideas. Referring to a review of his first book by Jean Meyer that such ideas seemed to float in the air, Collier asserts his intention to anchor them in “the political *events* of their time” (xv) rather than the culture or society more broadly. Therefore, he organizes the book into alternating thematic and narrative sections. Part I, with two chapters, introduces the reader to the early republic and the conservative system established by the 1833 constitution. Parts II and IV, also with two chapters each, follow the partisan politics of elections, congressional debates, and short-lived revolts from 1835 to 1851 and 1851 to 1864 respectively. Part III, which Collier identifies as the core of the book, is composed

1. For a recent debate on the concept of political culture among Nils Jacobsen and Cristóbal Aljovín de Losada, on one side, and Alan Knight, on the other, see Jacobsen and Aljovín, *Political Cultures in the Andes, 1750–1950* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 1–68. For a synthesis of recent work on popular participation, see Sarah C. Chambers, “New Nations, New Citizens: Political Culture in Nineteenth-Century Mexico, Peru and Argentina,” in Thomas H. Holloway, ed., *Blackwell Companion to Latin American History* (Boston: Blackwell, forthcoming).

of four thematic chapters exploring Chilean political attitudes, “their *cosmovisión* or *imaginario*” (xvii) at mid-century.

Collier contends, despite the fiery rhetoric of the partisan press, that there was relatively little ideological difference among Chile’s political class. Although he adopts the standard labels (not used at the time) of Liberal and Conservative for the main parties in formation, he asserts that both adhered to the fundamental tenets of nineteenth-century liberalism (with a small *L*): representative government, the protection of civil liberties, and economic progress based upon private enterprise. The two ends of the spectrum differed primarily in their relative emphasis on liberty or order. Liberals focused their opposition on key elements of the 1833 constitution: its strong executive, centralized authority (local authorities down to the level of subdelegate were appointed rather than elected), and its frequently invoked measures for suspending civil liberties during states of emergency. There were differing opinions on religious tolerance and the proper relationship between the state and the Catholic Church, but these did not map neatly onto partisan groups. Liberals tended to be more tolerant of popular unrest, perhaps primarily because they were out of power, but few called for an extension of suffrage (defined under the 1833 constitution as adult men with sufficient property, capital, or income from a craft or trade to be self-supporting). Only a small “radical fringe” (135)—most notably Santiago Arcos, cofounder with Francisco Bilbao of the *Sociedad de la Igualdad*—called for land reform, tariff protection for artisans and a democratization of the Civic Guard. Consensus also reigned in attitudes toward other nations. Most political elites admired France for its culture, England for its economic power, and the United States for its democratic institutions, but denounced foreign intervention anywhere in Latin America.

Given this high degree of ideological consensus, Chile’s relative political stability seems unsurprising. Indeed, the narrative chapters in parts II and IV trace divisions among Conservatives as much as their disputes with Liberals. During the period from 1835 to 1851, moderates within the Conservative movement supported authoritarian measures during times of apparent crisis, such as the war against the Peru-Bolivia Confederation (1836–39) or the Liberal unrest of 1850 and 1851, but later supported pardons and amnesties for opponents of the regime. Under President Manuel Bulnes, there was a loosening of press censorship and an 1841 amnesty for officers who had supported Ramón Freire’s failed rebellion against the Conservative seizure of power in 1830. The administrations of Manuel Montt in the 1850s, by contrast, were marked by a hard-line approach to the opposition, beginning with Montt’s refusal to ratify an amnesty promised by Bulnes in treaty negotiations during a Liberal revolt in 1851. When Montt alienated many former allies by his failure to appoint an inclusive cabinet and his conflictive relationship with the

Archbishop, a group of Conservatives defected from the government and ultimately formed an alliance with Liberals. The eventual victory of this coalition, according to Collier, came neither as a result of the 1859 Civil War nor (at least directly) the subsequent presidential elections, but from a peaceful courting of President José Joaquín Pérez in the 1860s. Collier sees the period of 1858 to 1862 as the foundation of a particular Chilean form of politics: a multi-party system with a coalition government and a loyal opposition.

Collier concludes by musing on the underlying causes of this triumph of liberalism (with a small L) and considering counterfactual scenarios. He credits the Conservatives, particularly Portales, for establishing a stable system in which liberalization could develop peacefully and gradually, and ventures that Liberal victories in either the 1851 or 1859 rebellions might have opened the door for further violent upheavals. On the other hand, he considers that Montt's authoritarianism might have delayed the transition to a more "civilized political life," and gives credit to the Liberals for "challenging the Conservatives to live up to the political ideals both parties constantly proclaimed" (251). Here as throughout the book, Collier adopts a balanced and even droll tone. His depiction of a fairly united and harmonious political elite in early republican Chile is convincing, but his neglect of other sectors of society and potential class conflict weakens his larger claims about the practice of politics. And despite the detailed narrative of changing administrations, at times the ideas still seem to float on their own. "Whatever their practice," Collier asserts of Conservatives, "their self-image was not authoritarian. For all their emphasis on order, their propaganda shows no trace of an authoritarian *philosophy*" (128). One is left wondering about the reception of that discourse, including direct appeals to workers.

Collier makes no claim to be doing anything other than tracing the history of political ideas, just as he had throughout his career. The editors of and contributors to a recent anthology published in Mexico, *Transición y cultura política: De la colonia al México independiente*, explicitly situate their work within the recent trend toward theorizing a broader concept of "political culture," yet in many ways the result is similar to Collier's book. The editors define "political culture" as "la conjunción del discurso y de las prácticas políticas y culturales" (7), but most of the chapters focus on elite discourse and use sources (newspapers and political treatises) similar to those analyzed by Collier. For example, Catherine Andrews, in a chapter on the liberal language used by supporters of the Plan de Jalapa in opposition to the presidency of Vicente Guerrero, makes a similar argument about "liberalism with a small L." Although most historians identify this movement as the shift to Conservative control of the national state in Mexico in 1830, she points out that most politicians of this period shared a commitment to constitutionalism and

the protection of individual rights. Indeed, the Plan de Jalapa explicitly denounced Guerrero's government as unconstitutional (the congress had annulled opposition votes) and dictatorial (for his assumption of emergency powers during the Spanish invasion). Andrews also sees the subsequent measures to reduce popular participation in elections as consistent with liberal (if not democratic) definitions of citizens as independent property owners, and denies that the dissolution of eleven state legislatures was an act of centralism because those elected in 1826 were restored. Andrews, like Collier, makes the important point that "el liberalismo no es una filosofía homogénea, sino un crisol de diferentes ideas y opiniones sobre la manera más adecuada de defender, proteger y garantizar las libertades individuales" (164). But she may overstate her argument by asserting that electoral reforms such as the prohibition of the distribution of preprinted ballots was simply an effort by the new government to ensure that the elections functioned properly.

Other chapters in the anthology explore the emerging political discourses of modernity from various angles. Rubén Ruiz Guerra analyzes five works that defended freedom of religion. Jaime Olveda provides an overview of debates over whether the newly proclaimed sovereignty rested in the nation or the states. Mario Vázquez Olivera asserts that in the region of Chiapas, the desire of local elites to free themselves from the authority of Guatemala led them to develop a discourse of Mexican nationalism. The specificity of many of the chapters will make them of interest primarily to specialists in Mexican history. Alfredo Avila revisits Iturbidista conspiracies in 1823 and 1824. Graciela Gaytán Herrera traces the trajectory of an enlightened *peninsular*, José María Fagoaga, whose ideas were identified by shifting regimes as loyal, insurgent, and finally insufficiently liberal. And Miguel Soto details Lorenzo de Zavala's scheme to sell land to settlers in Texas, proposing that rather than treason he could have seen his actions as compatible with the progress of republicanism.

The chapters in the first section of the book, however, do go beyond an analysis of political discourse to consider questions about the production and reception of such texts. Cristina Gómez Álvarez analyzes 314 estate inventories that included books compiled by the Juzgado de Bienes Difuntos between 1750 and 1819. She found that although *peninsulares* made up only 2 percent of the Mexican population, they represented 52 percent of the book owners in the sample. Creoles were also overrepresented, though to a significantly lesser degree: 16 percent of the population and 30 percent of book owners. Gómez Álvarez proposes that this finding should make us question the assumption that creoles were primarily responsible for the diffusion of new ideas during the enlightenment. Priests and bureaucrats had the largest collections, but merchants composed the profession most likely to own books. Although religious books outnumbered all others throughout the period, she did

find an increasing variety (e.g., literature, science and history) after 1790, even in the collections of priests. The three most common books were by Spanish enlightenment author Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, Cervantes, and a seventeenth-century religious text by Juan Martínez de la Parra.

For the period after independence, Laura Suárez de la Torre examines the output of two printers. Although the sample is too small to be representative, her finding of the importance of government contracts for one printer's income is suggestive. Finally, critiquing the tendency of historians to make claims about new forms of sociability and public opinion with little evidence, Laurence Coudart analyzes letters to the editors of the newspaper *El Sol* as at least a partial source about readership. He finds that the newspaper devoted increasing and more prominent space to such letters from 1823 to 1830, which contributed to the construction of a community of readers. The letters used the language being diffused in other liberal texts—liberty, constitution, guarantees, nation, citizen—demonstrating their reception by at least a self-conscious and literate elite. In terms of tone and content, those in 1823–1824 were more varied and idealistic, whereas by 1829–1830 many become more partisan, pessimistic and polemical. He concludes with some musings about paradoxes in early republican meanings given to the concept of public opinion. The editors and readers of *El Sol* contrast “un ‘espíritu público’ [popular] que hay que controlar y una ‘opinión pública’ que hay que formar” (101).

The editors of *Transición y cultura política* and several of the individual authors make three general claims: the importance of studying the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a coherent period, that it was a period marked by “profound transformation,” and an intent to study both discourse and practice as elements of “political culture” (7). Such goals are difficult to achieve in an anthology where chapters focus on different discrete periods, regions, and topics. In *The Time of Liberty*, Peter Guardino makes similar assertions and is better able to build a coherent argument by focusing on part of the region of Oaxaca (its capital city and the highland district of Villa Alta) between 1750 and 1850. Over the course of this century, Guardino finds a “dramatic cultural transformation” from “paradigms of royal sovereignty and colonial corporate and ethnic difference” to “images of popular sovereignty and republican citizenship” (1). Moreover, he disputes the influential thesis of François-Xavier Guerra that such modern political ideas were embraced only by a small, educated elite while corporate and hierarchical forms of organization from the colonial period continued unchanged.² Rather, Guardino argues

2. François-Xavier Guerra, *Modernidad e independencias: Ensayos sobre las revoluciones hispánicas* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1999). For a sampling of other scholars who take up Guerra's thesis, see essays by Antonio Annino, Mónica Quijada, Annick Lempérière, Marie-Danielle Demélas, and Andrés Lira in Annino and Guerra, eds., *Inventando la nación: Iberoamérica, Siglo XIX* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica,

first, that plebeians and peasants engaged the new discourse even as they combined it with existing ideals, and second, that instability in the early republic resulted not from an incomplete transition to modern political practices but rather from the intense partisan conflict that arose from the establishment of highly competitive elections after independence.

By examining a long period of time, Guardino is able to trace the most important moments of transition. He identifies the Bourbon reforms as having the potential to reshape both relationships among various colonial subjects and the very justifications of colonial governance by attacking corporate privileges, attempting to achieve greater rationality and efficiencies in administration, and asserting the predominance of law over custom (92–93). However, he finds that their actual impact in Oaxaca was fairly limited. Although indigenous peasants in particular were active in court litigation, they could appeal to an existing Hapsburg body of law as well as custom. Moreover, imposing the reforms within an absolutist system of governance, rather than seeking out local allies, limited the diffusion of new ideas. Nevertheless, Guardino does confirm recent studies that identify important shifts in political culture before independence with the implementation of the liberal constitution of 1812. He asserts that the unified defense of the captive Spanish king and the enfranchisement of indigenous and mestizo citizens by the Cortes as well as the language of insurgency together contributed to a discourse of equality that would continue to influence early national politics. The expansion of suffrage (which included those of African descent after independence) had a particularly significant impact in the city, where two nonwhites were elected to the town council in 1814 and four nonelite councilmen took seats in 1821. The local political alliance known as the “vinegars” successfully mobilized urban voters to support a platform based upon the ideals of egalitarianism, federalism, and the defense of Mexico’s national sovereignty from an ongoing Spanish threat. Along with the works by Collier and Andrews reviewed earlier, Guardino increases our understanding of early national political ideologies by distinguishing the *vinagres* from later liberals like Benito Juárez, pointing out that they were not anticlerical and actually supported broader popular participation in politics.

Guardino finds less change in the political culture of the rural and predominantly indigenous district of Villa Alta; villagers continued to use the legal system and periodic riots to protect community autonomy. And as long as they kept paying taxes, most government authorities were resigned to allowing a continuation of the status quo. This mutual

2003); and Erika Pani and Alicia Salmerón, eds., *Conceptualizar lo que se ve François-Xavier Guerra historiador: homenaje* (Mexico City: Instituto Mora, 2004). Guerra’s work is also cited by many of the contributors to *Transición y cultura política*.

accommodation resulted in the election of representatives from the “oils,” or *aceites*, who were allied with the Catholic Church and came to support the shift to more centralist forms of government after 1830. Tactically, these *aceites* were more likely to form clienteles among the priests and local officials chosen by indigenous communities as their electors, using their connections to religious brotherhoods (*cofradías*) and extended kin networks. The primary change in village politics was the abolition of the indigenous nobility. The establishment of elections to choose community leaders in some cases favored younger, more bicultural men though in others the elder *principales* still managed to influence the outcome.

This relative continuity contrasts not only with urban Oaxaca, but also with Guardino’s earlier study of peasant politics in the region of Guerrero, where he demonstrated that effective alliances forged between communities and radical liberal leaders such as Juan Alvarez allowed peasants to defend local control of government and land while simultaneously developing a connection to national politics.³ Guardino had chosen Oaxaca as his subsequent case study in part to explore political transitions in a region that experienced less political upheaval. His findings led him to revisit debates over the degree to which Mexican peasant politics was oriented internally to the community or alternatively engaged with national movements and ideologies.⁴ Guardino attempts to reconcile both approaches, but tilts more toward the latter; he concedes that peasants were “primarily concerned with securing a decent subsistence and living culturally satisfying lives” (284), but that “to fulfill these desires peasants also sometimes required activities and relationships that extended beyond community boundaries” (285).

Like Guardino, Cecilia Méndez argues that peasants were not passive bystanders but rather engaged new political ideas and forged alliances with national leaders and movements. The organization of *The Plebeian Republic: The Huanta Rebellion and the Making of the Peruvian State, 1820–1850*, however, takes a distinct tact. Rather than beginning with the *longue durée*, Méndez uses a specific revolt of 1825 to 1828 as her starting point and then works backward and forward to build the broader context of the event. Surprisingly, the rebellion was pro-royalist, organized in part by officers of the recently defeated Spanish army, but Méndez argues that most of the rebels acted in ways that departed from the colonial

3. Peter Guardino, *Peasants, Politics, and the Formation of Mexico’s National State*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

4. The first position is argued by Eric Van Young, *The Other Rebellion: Popular and Ideology in Mexico, 1810–1816* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); the latter by Florencia E. Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); and Guy Thomson and David G. LaFrance, *Patriotism, Politics, and Popular Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century Mexico: Juan Francisco Lucas and the Puebla Sierra* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1999).

order: they abandoned caste distinctions, defended the interests of new economic sectors, and later allied with liberal caudillos. Nor were the peasants fatalistically resisting the new economic and political order, as suggested by an earlier interpretation of the revolt.

After providing a narrative of the rebellion in the second chapter, chapters 3 and 4 explore its royalist roots and closely analyze the discourse of proclamations and letters. Méndez does an excellent job of eschewing the vision of hindsight in order to consider the appeal of monarchism to Peruvians in the 1820s. The slow and uneven advance of the insurgent forces meant that a return of Spanish rule was not only imaginable but “a desirable option among the populace, who were feeling alienated by such a prolonged state of anarchy and unruliness and by a seemingly mindless war” (57). She further proposes that Peruvian nationalism was emerging as much in opposition to the presence of Colombian as of Spanish troops. Finally, the middling sectors of Huanta—small landholders and traders—had received both financial and political benefits from the Spanish monarchs in the decade prior to the rebellion. In 1816, for example, Ferdinand VII made tax concessions to local landholders in newly developing coca regions who had been opposing the attempts of previous Bourbon administrators to regularize land titles. Images of the king had circulated during ceremonies celebrating the 1812 constitution, many Huantinos remained loyal to the Crown during the 1814–1815 revolt originating in Cuzco, and one of the upwardly mobile leaders of the subsequent royalist rebellion in Huanta claimed that he had been awarded the rank of general by the viceroy. Rebel proclamations and letters also appealed to Catholicism, less to defend the doctrine and personnel of the Church than to present themselves as deserving of respect and justice in contrast to the infidel Indians of the jungle.

Chapters 5 and 6 analyze how the rebel government operated within the context of the local society. Méndez carefully maps the geography of the rebellion, tied together by networks of trade. In addition to indigenous inhabitants living under some degree of communal governance both in independent villages and on haciendas, Huanta had a significant mestizo population. Méndez acknowledges but downplays class divisions, proposing instead a model of “asymmetrical interdependencies” (153) in which muleteers played an important mediating role. Such traders and landowners became military leaders and never identified themselves as Indian (though outsiders often did), but they sought recognition of their authority from the communities. The rebel government, in contrast to the early republican state, effectively controlled the collection and expenditure of local revenues (primarily tithes), organized public labor, and established courts to hear land disputes and punish crimes and morals violations. Méndez argues that the rebels’ stance on caste distinctions and taxation, in particular, marked a departure from

colonial practices: local authorities (*alcaldes*) were appointed to govern over those of both Spanish and indigenous descent, and local leaders repeatedly called for an end to the Indian head tax (tribute).⁵ She also demonstrates that the community of “Iquicha,” which gives its name to the rebellion, far from having deep roots in the pre-Columbian past (as later ethnographies would propose) was settled during the course of the rebellion. This new community as an invented identity symbolizes Méndez’s broader assertion that Andean peasant society was neither timeless nor isolated.

In the introduction, Méndez places her work in debate with the dominant interpretations of Peruvian independence that, whether nationalist or Marxist, downplay the importance of popular participation as an integral part of the process. In the concluding chapters, she addresses the historiography on the early republic, which similarly finds little evidence of *successful* alliances between caudillos and peasants and, thus, limited influence on national politics.⁵ Méndez, by contrast, argues that the Huanta rebels, though defeated as royalists, were ultimately successful in their alliances with liberal caudillos José Luis de Orbegoso and Andrés de Santa Cruz. These generals and their local representatives, needing to recruit support for their war against Agustín Gamarra, reached out to the Huantinos, whom they had once denounced as savages, addressing them respectfully as “citizens so fond of their Patria’s happiness” and “worthy of the Nation’s gratitude” (196). In exchange, peasant leaders persistently and successfully petitioned the state to fulfill the promises made in wartime, most often exemptions from paying tribute. The distinctive experience of one region cannot by itself overturn previous findings, and the degree to which the events of Huanta influenced the national state is not fully supported. Nonetheless, Méndez’s findings do signal the need for further research before making generalizations about Peruvian political culture after independence.

The last book under review, *The Case of the Ugly Suitor and Other Histories of Love, Gender, and Nation in Buenos Aires, 1776–1870* by Jeffrey M. Shumway, emphasizes the cultural side of political culture to a much greater extent than the others and is the only one to focus centrally on gender. Shumway writes in a highly accessible and engaging manner, making the text very suitable for adoption in undergraduate courses. While filled with quirky characters and both amusing and tragic tales, the book also demonstrates the centrality of the family during the transition from colonialism to nation building: “For the state, the family was

5. Nelson Manrique, “Campesinado, Guerra y conciencia nacional,” *Revista Andina* 4 (1) (1986): 161–72; Mallon, *Peasant and Nation*; Mark Thurner, *From Two Republics to One Divided* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); and Charles Walker, *Smoldering Ashes: Cuzco and the Creation of Republican Peru, 1780–1840* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

a perfect place to inculcate patriotism and good citizenship" (5). In six chapters, Shumway provides a succinct overview of the laws governing family relations, the early development of state welfare agencies, and attitudes toward gender, youth and race. He recognizes continuities in law and social customs, but asserts that attitudes and practices gradually changed to benefit women and youth. Women did not reject their traditional roles, for example, but used motherhood as a justification for playing an increasingly active role in society. On the other hand, parents, especially poor mothers judging from the anecdotes, lost some of their authority over children as the state established new initiatives in education and welfare.

The core of Shumway's primary research is based upon an analysis of legal disputes between parents and youth over marriage choice (*disensos*) and over child custody. Here the specialist reader may be frustrated by the absence of tables and a discussion of the full universe of cases. In two places, Shumway does provide statistics. He supports his assertion that youth were increasingly able to freely choose marriage partners by contrasting their success rate in litigation of 64 percent in the colonial period with 86 percent after independence. He also argues for a slight increase in the opportunity for interracial marriages, identifying a drop in endogamous marriages from 87 percent in 1810 to 73 percent in 1837. In the *disenso* cases, he traces a shift in the reasons parents gave for opposing their children's marriages from racial inequality to the inability to support a family (i.e., class), a justification that gets written into the Civil Code of 1870. For the most part, however, he uses the testimonies in the court cases to explore attitudes about romantic and paternal love, passion, and the distinction between persuasion and coercion. The analysis of child custody cases is particularly lacking in aggregate information on the disputing parties and sentencing patterns. Occasionally, he seems to take one or another plaintiff's version of events at face value or fails to consider the outcome. Shumway cites the radical critique of patriarchal authority advanced in one child custody case, for example, as part of his evidence of beneficial change for women, even though the judge actually decided against the mother (136).

The diversity of themes, methodologies, and intended audiences represented in these five books is a testament to the vitality of research on the politics of the middle period in Latin American history. Collier's book on Chile and the anthology on Mexico will appeal most to political historians of those countries; Collier, for example, addresses important debates among Chilean historians but cites no comparative examples from other countries in his bibliography. Nonetheless, both show that despite the venerable pedigree of the history of political ideas, there are still important issues to be explored and contributions to be made. In particular, these and other scholars (including Guardino) are tracing

liberalism in much greater detail as it developed and changed over the course of the nineteenth century. Guardino and Méndez, building upon works of the past decade, demonstrate that non-elites were also part of this process, participating in elections and rebellions and putting forward their own interpretations of new political ideas.

Analyzing political cultures in their social context is most easily accomplished in regional studies, which poses a challenge for synthesis not usually faced by historians of ideas. The picture that had been emerging from works on various parts of Mexico and Peru tended to show greater and more successful popular mobilization in the former than the latter. Guardino and Méndez both address the larger, implicitly comparative, literature on nation-state formation; surprisingly, the regions they examine, Oaxaca and Huanta respectively, complicate that emerging consensus. Regional variation is inevitable, but their findings call for us to consider more systematically what factors at the local and national levels favored the formation of alliances between political or military leaders, on the one hand, and peasants or urban plebeians, on the other.

Compared to the historiography on political ideas and peasant participation in this period, research on gender is still relatively limited and the possibilities for synthesis farther off.⁶ We need more research into the issues raised by Shumway in order to move beyond the recognition that the transition from the colonial to national periods had mixed consequences for women and to draw more specific conclusions about those opportunities and limits according to differences in socioeconomic and civil status (i.e. the distinctions among single women, widows, mothers, wives and daughters in both law and practice). Historians should also be more attentive to the ways in which masculinities helped shaped and were in turn transformed by the political changes during the transition from colonial to national states.

6. Silva M. Arrom, *The Women of Mexico City* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985); Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux, eds. *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); Christine Hünefeldt, *Liberalism in the Bedroom: Quarreling Spouses in Nineteenth-Century Lima* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000); Arlene J. Díaz, *Female Citizens, Patriarchs, and the Law in Venezuela, 1786–1904* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); and Sueann Caulfield, Sarah Chambers, and Lara Putnam, eds., *Honor, Status, and the Law in Modern Latin American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).