dynamics of everyday life based on the empathetic renderings presented here. At the same time, however, the regional focus is narrow, and the slice of life described in this book is rarely put into a broader historical perspective. That said, *Hijos del Pueblo* is a well-written book and a solid contribution to the historiography on Mexican gender roles and family life.

University of Houston SUSAN KELLOGG

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Roberto Breña (ed.), *En el umbral de las revoluciones hispánicas: el bienio 1808–1810* (Mexico City and Madrid: El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Internacionales and Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2010), pp. 404, pb.

Roberto Breña's edited work is a significant addition to the growing list of publications marking the bicentennial of Latin America's independence struggles. Presented first at a conference of the same name that was held at the Colegio de México in April 2008, the papers take as their focus the fateful two years that began with the French invasion of Spain and ended with the dissolution of the Junta Central in Seville early in 1810. It contains chapters on both Spain and much of Spanish America that detail the different as well as the frequently similar responses to the crises, some very fine studies of particular regions and developments, and numerous references in the footnotes to recent publications that will be of great value to anyone interested in the period.

The 13 authors have interpreted the subject in a variety of ways, but a common point of departure is the profound loyalty exhibited toward Ferdinand VII and to the Spain that he represented following the French invasion, Ferdinand's forced abdication and his replacement by Joseph Bonaparte. A second common feature is the authors' espousal of what seems to have become the accepted orthodoxy regarding the independence period: that the principal reasons for Spanish American independence are to be found in the post-invasion developments and not in the previous Bourbon Reform period. This viewpoint has been nurtured first and foremost by Jaime Rodríguez and the late François-Xavier Guerra, so it is not surprising that their works appear frequently in the book's footnotes. This also explains why references to enlightened ideas and animosities arising from the late colonial reforms are few, thereby reinforcing the importance of these threshold years of 1808 to 1810.

Roberto Breña's introduction provides the background and the context for the contributions as well as a discussion of some of the historiography of the period. The following chapters have been organised geographically, beginning with events in the metropole. Ignacio Fernández Sarasola discusses the Spanish move towards constitutionalism after the removal of Ferdinand and the different options provided by contending groups, while Fernando Durán López surveys the creation of public opinion among the same groups, pointing to the liberals' efforts to use the opportunity to reduce the powers of the monarch. Anthony McFarlane provides a bridge between Spain and Spanish America with an inclusive overview of the surrounding events, arguing that while Spain was moving toward greater unity, except in the political realm – as the previous writers had shown – Spanish America was beginning to fracture.

These are some of the issues that the subsequent chapters elaborate upon while concentrating in particular on the elites' political and ideological responses to the vacuum at the top of the administrative structure. The Spanish solution of regional juntas proved popular in the Americas, but without the military justification of the metropolis they lacked a raison d'être. This forced local leaders to search for alternative reasons for their creation, which they found not in the enlightened concept of popular representation but in precedents from the distant Spanish past. The various existing institutions in Spanish America – viceroy, *audiencia* and *cabildo* – at first sought to fill the political vacuum, but lacking the guiding hand of the monarch, they soon came into conflict with one another. Moreover, since the majority of the administrative positions were at the time filled by *peninsulares* whose status was now in doubt because of the removal of the king, officials tried to gain local support through the establishment of juntas. The goal was to maintain Spanish rule with some sort of legal government, but as Alfredo Ávila shows in the case of New Spain, the viceroy's attempt to set up a junta was seen as a threat to Spanish rule and led to his ouster. Nevertheless, loyalty remained strong, with the *patria* considered to encompass both metropole and overseas regions. In the case of New Spain, that loyalty was evident in the financial contributions, both voluntary and forced, that Carlos Marichal describes in detail, while hinting at the possibility of future disaffection. Loyalty remained firm as well in Central America, despite the existence of regional feelings that had developed in recent decades, as examined by Xiomara Avendaño Rojas.

Regionalism was even stronger to the south, paving the way for internal division and the eventual rupture from Spain, as Marta Irurozqui indicates in the case of Upper Peru. Here, local desires to create a separate viceroyalty sparked attempts at forming juntas in La Paz and La Plata (Sucre) that were fundamentally the same but provoked quite different official responses. Marcela Ternavasio's explanation of local loyalty in Buenos Aires is tied to earlier events, specifically the British invasions of 1806 and 1807. These made an immediate hero of the French-born military leader and subsequent interim viceroy, but his nationality made him suspect in this post-invasion period, as were Francophiles elsewhere, and his survival rested largely on the support of local creole militias.

Turning to the Pacific coast, Víctor Peralta Ruiz focuses on the issuance of loyalist propaganda to help explain the strength of royalism in Peru, while Alfredo Jocelyn-Holt Letelier provides a brief examination of developments in Chile. Kenneth Andrien presents a much broader picture in explaining the response in Quito, as he lays out the economic framework and resulting regional differences of Ecuador to explain the failure of the attempts by Quito's elite to establish a junta in 1809. In the case of New Granada, Isidro Vanegas examines the personal relationship that the locals had with their monarch and how this was not respected by the Junta Central, leading to a weakening of the relationship by 1809. Clément Thibaud presents a similar picture for Venezuela, but he recognises the social component by referring to the importance of the Haitian revolution and the fear of racial unrest evident in the response of the Caracas elite.

During these 'two crucial years', to use Guerra's phrase, political independence seems to have been far from the minds of just about everyone, further proof of the authors' belief about colonial loyalty. They point out that when the word 'independence' was used, it applied primarily to the situation in Spain and the war of liberation against the French. Very occasionally colonial authorities referred to it

with its anti-colonial meaning, but more as a threat to ensure loyalty and win support than as a reflection of local desires or actions. And yet, many of the authors feel the necessity to push the chronological boundary backwards to make their points, raising some questions about the true nature of those two years. Perhaps they were slightly less vital than the authors would have us believe; perhaps there was a significant degree of alienation at the time that needs to be discussed. Nonetheless, this stimulating collection provides some definite food for thought and will certainly be a part of future discussions on the subject.

University of Toronto PETER BLANCHARD

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Pierre Raymond, *Mucha tela que cortar: la saga de una fábrica textil y la pugna de las familias Caballero y López por su control* (Bogotá: Editorial Planeta Colombiana, 2008), pp. xix + 380, pb.

The French sociologist Pierre Raymond arrived in Colombia around 1980 and has since then contributed to the development of rural studies in the country. Thus, he became familiar with the Santander region and particularly with the cane-producing River Suárez basin to which Suaita municipality belongs. Among other topics, Raymond is familiar with the long history of *santanderano* cotton production. Unexpectedly, he found a chain of notary's documents which, supplemented by interviews with many of the surviving actors, consultation of newspapers, solid bibliography and academic conversation, allowed him to trace the history of the factories of San José, located in Suaita. Raymond considers this subject 'worthy of careful study, for all it reveals of economic history, social and political life and because it belongs to the eastern Colombian region on which the studies of industrial and business history are scarce' (p. 9).

The narrative of this agricultural and industrial enterprise, in a period spanning seven decades, c. 1906–81, unravels a complex and fascinating society. At its core stands Lucas Caballero Barrera, the patriarch of the company. He was a prominent political figure after the Thousand Days' War (1899–1902). Minister of finance in 1905, weary of political disorder, parochial and unaware of the intricacies of cosmopolitan capitalism, Caballero made several trips to Europe and the United States over the ensuing years in search of capital for developing an ambitious and vague industrial project, a 'chimera' based on a large property in San José.

So begins a saga of unexpected friendships, fierce clashes and, above all, legal disputes that weaved together the Caballero Barrera family group, Belgian and French financiers and a US textile manufacturer from 1912 to 1918, when the European creditors took over. The author describes carefully the development of the company: its unresolved funding problems, its obsolete technology, high transport costs, bottlenecks in the supply of inputs (cotton and labour), and the poor marketing of chocolate and coarse fabrics, its main products. From 1912 to 1944 there loomed management hurdles for a firm that had plants located in an isolated large estate in eastern Colombia, run with little coordination from Bogotá, Antwerp and New York.

Permanent disputes between partners were, ultimately, over control of the majority of shares. The Caballero family returned to obtain majority ownership in 1944, thanks to its network of political connections. Then it started a fierce struggle, both private and public, with a branch of the López Caballero, an ally of the Franco-Belgian group.