importance of land ownership for individual freedom and national liberty, the dark side of which required the expropriation and conquest of Indian populations. But the people who controlled the production of geographic descriptions from 1780s through the 1820s were men who, like Clark, informed and were informed by the treaties, laws,and federal policies intended to lay the groundwork for further expansion. This was a difficult and tentative process that identified the Far West as "a place of considerable opportunities, but also a landscape of tremendous danger" (p. 162), warning Americans against their expansionist ambitions and contrasting significantly with the boosterism that dominated contemporaneous depictions of the Near West. The mass-produced illustrations, dramatic fictional tales set on the frontier, and landscape portraiture of the 1830s and 1840s helped push the boundary between Near West and Far West, signaling the transition from the early American Republic to the antebellum era (p. 217). The vibrant literary and visual images produced by men like Washington Irving and John Casper Wild and the profit-motivated agency Currier and Ives had finally caught up with American public opinion and the thousands of individuals who had already voted with their feet.

In short, the world Kastor draws out for William Clark is itself not unlike a map. Spotlighting Clark's life's work and relationships reveals the networks of places and people that made the unknown, dangerous space of the West into a knowable and conquerable place, at least in the American imagination.

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POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

Dignifying Argentina: Peronism, Citizenship, and Mass Consumption. By Eduardo Elena. Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011. Pp. x, 332. Preface. Notes. Bibliography. Index. $27.95 paper.

Juan Domingo Perón's first two terms in office, from his election in 1946 to his overthrow in 1955, have attracted a mountain of scholarship, yet the topic is hardly exhausted. Until quite recently, festering partisan loyalties reduced much of the Argentine literature to competing subfields of hagiography and denunciation, while the English-language historiography was dominated by gross simplification and stereotype. Eduardo Elena's excellent book, part of an exciting new boom in Perón studies, avoids these pitfalls, providing a nuanced and innovative treatment of Argentina's most transformative decade.

Elena refocuses the history of Peronism on the question of mass consumption, and in so doing he produces a series of important new insights. The Perón regime oversaw a dramatic expansion of the welfare state, even as it ushered in an unprecedented redistribution of income to the working class. Unlike most previous historians, Elena appreci-

ates the intimate and problematic relationship between these two sets of policies: both were aimed at making a "dignified life" accessible to ordinary Argentines. This approach enables Elena to remove Peronism from the confines of labor history, where it has most often been relegated. Eschewing the well-known story of Perón's negotiations with the unions, Elena sheds new light on the origins of the movement. He demonstrates how policy makers appropriated existing social scientific and reformist discourses on standards of living, recasting a technocratic vocabulary as part of a populist appeal.

Elena excels at uncovering the contradictions in Peronist policy. He charts the regime's reliance on a traditional view of gender roles, on aesthetic judgments drawn from the commercial realm, and on notions of respectability typically associated with the middle class. As economic conditions worsened in the late 1940s and early 1950s, a regime that had vigorously defended workers' right to comfort and even luxury now attacked prodigality and preached thriftiness. Unlike many other accounts of so-called "classic Peronism," Elena's book pays a great deal of attention to the years after Evita Perón's death in 1952, demonstrating that the government was actually very successful in implementing austerity measures, restraining inflation, and righting the economic ship.

Elena's analyses of Peronist propaganda are often thought-provoking, but the book's most exciting sections explore the reactions of ordinary Argentines to the very novel set of policies aimed at them. At the recently opened archive of the Ministry of Technical Affairs, Elena discovered a huge collection of letters written to the government by individuals and private groups, and he makes very good use of these sources. The letters reveal the enthusiasm with which people embraced the government's war on speculation, as well as the extent to which many women adopted Evita's critique of the wasteful spending of male workers. Elena also uses the letters to explore popular notions of citizenship. Supplicants describe themselves as loyal Peronists and emphasize the hardship and sufferings that they face. They see themselves as deserving of government aid, but they tend to avoid any invocation of political rights. Interestingly, the letters, particularly those that came in response to the president's invitation for comment on his second Five-Year Plan in 1951, reveal the limits of Peronist authoritarianism. Rather than depict themselves only as grateful recipients, letter writers emphasize their own work in autonomous organizations aimed at community improvement; they criticize local officials and confidently propose new policies.

Dignifying Argentina will be a must-read for historians of Argentina as well as for Latin Americanists interested in the history of populism and consumption. Given its clear prose and broad theme, the book may also be useful in advanced undergraduate courses. Alongside his analysis of mass consumption, Elena provides a solid narrative history of the period. Moreover, he situates the Argentine case within the international context, depicting Peronism as a distinctive version of the transformations occurring in many other countries. The result is a book that can be appreciated by specialists and students alike.

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