

a strong case for how the war effectively brought various ethnic and racial groups together for the first time to create a sense of nation that had not previously existed in Bolivia.

Using newspaper reports and archival material from both Bolivian and Paraguayan archives, the author seeks to hear the voices of those from below. This is where Niebuhr struggles a bit. He is too often dependent on secondary literature to fill the void in primary material. This is disappointing, in that tuning into popular culture in the form of music, theater, or art could have helped the author better “hear” the voices of the masses. Also disappointing are the distracting comparisons to wars and revolutions outside of the period in question. Examples include paragraph-long comparisons between what was happening in early twentieth-century Bolivia and the US Civil War and the Vietnam War. Although certainly demonstrating the depth and breadth of the author’s readings, in the end these cases prove to be more distracting to the narrative than beneficial.

The text, however, is a great companion to other works about the rise of the MNR. These include Laura Gotkowitz’s *A Revolution for Our Rights: Indigenous Struggles for Land and Justice in Bolivia, 1880–1952* (2017). Niebuhr’s book also serves as a welcome addition to the understanding of populism and populist movements in Latin America more generally.

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## PRINTING AND POLITICS

*Ink Under the Fingernails: Printing Politics in Nineteenth-Century Mexico.* By Corinna Zeltsman. Oakland: University of California Press, 2021. Pp. 339. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index.  
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Historians tend to discriminate against unprinted versos. Corinna Zeltsman, however, is unusually interested in the material side of print culture, and looks at these things: flipping over one protest flyer, she found on its reverse side ghostly mirror images of multiple predecessors, all pasted on the same bit of wall to fustigate the government of the day. As they say in the bullring, another venue for protest, “*El detalle valió el boleto.*” It typifies the imagination, originality, and meticulous attention to detail that bring an important book to life and make it unmissable for anyone interested in Mexico’s nineteenth-century public sphere and politics.

It was not just what was printed, Zeltsman argues, that shaped how people thought about, talked about, and acted in the politics of the time: it was authors’ mere ability to turn manuscript into print and get it out there in the first place. That in itself was a major

demonstration of power and seriousness of purpose, whether materialized in a newspaper, an opposition pamphlet, or a political poster. Harnessing the clout of public opinion required the new technology of the printing presses, the money to operate them, and the business and political savvy of the people who knew how to use them. The freedom to print words was just as important as the freedom to write them.

Printworkers counted from the beginnings of independent Mexico, and their population exploded in the course of the nineteenth century. By 1823 the handful of print shops of the late colony had risen to 22, and in the 1840s the invention of the cylindrical press made far greater print runs possible, doubling the size of newspapers and taking them from biweekly to daily. The number of workers in the industry quadrupled over the first decade of the Porfiriato, and the subsequent introduction of the high-speed rotary press allowed a whole new order of magnitude of circulation for officialist papers like *El Imparcial*, which printed the daily run under its masthead. When the regime collapsed, any revolutionary worth their salt kept a close eye on their media; Emiliano Zapata seized as many presses as he could and even telegraphed underlings to monitor their use.

As technology changed, the most basic political mechanisms for controlling access to print shops remained constant: censorship and sponsorship. PIPSA—the state paper monopoly that allowed the Partido Revolucionario Institucional to control press content more subtly—had a distant predecessor in viceroys’ monopolization of scarce paper stocks. Allocations of paper and contracts to print official publications, propaganda, and advertising all favored some shops and put the squeeze on others. Printers faced bans, fines, shutdowns, the seizure of their machines, and arrests by governments of different persuasions on charges of sedition, operating without a government license libel, slander, and copyright infringement. Laws protecting a free press were circumvented with prosecutorial ingenuity. At the same time, however, laws clamping down on a free press were challenged or craftily circumvented by self-identifying “printer citizens” (102). Conservatives tended to be less enthusiastic about such people, but the print world was a complicated one, and liberal belief did not necessarily translate into liberal practice. The Emperor Maximilian, on the other hand, went from repressive to relatively tolerant press laws and shut down his own prior censorship system. He even had his own decrees printed in Nahuatl.

Zeltsman’s essentially chronological approach covers this history comprehensively in seven chapters that take the reader from the last days of the colony to the first days of the revolution. She establishes a balance among technology, politics, and culture, while maintaining a focus on the people of the printing trade who operated within and helped shape these structures. Well-penned case studies bring readers deeper into the grimy but enlightened world of the printshop through phenomena such as one printer’s commercial sample, which reflected the sophistication and ideological proclivities of the despised typesetters; or through the tortuous journey to print of a salacious potboiler, the anticlerical novel *Mysteries of the Inquisition*.

The result is a book with an important place in two historical literatures, those of Mexican liberalism and the public sphere, and the sort of good read that hopefully keeps our trade's own presses turning.

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## ENERGY IN MEXICO

*Fueling Mexico: Energy and Environment, 1850–1950.* By Germán Vergara. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. Pp. xii, 322. Figures. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$99.99 cloth.  
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Germán Vergara's well-researched book—based on materials from 18 archives and libraries—makes the compelling argument that the discovery, extraction, use, and impact of various forms of energy, including solar, water, wood, coal, natural gas, and oil, were the primary forces that drove Mexican history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. According to the author, Mexico's long march toward today's fossil-fuel economy was a slow, messy, nonlinear process shaped by broader political, economic, and technological changes.

Before addressing how Mexico became dependent on non-renewable fossil fuels, Vergara first examines the renewable energies that existed in the colonial and early national periods. These derived from the sun, rivers, and forests, as well as human and animal muscle. Vergara then addresses Porfirian Mexico and shows how the widespread concern over the limited capacity of renewable energy—which stemmed from the country's unfavorable hydroelectric conditions and its increasing deforestation—led the political and economic elite, along with their foreign benefactors, to develop more powerful energy sources. These sources would help Mexico to build an efficient and far-reaching commercial infrastructure that could foster the nation's industrialization and modernization. Following the path of England and the United States, coal was initially identified and mined as the solution to Mexico's "fuel problem" (that is, its "lack of cheap, abundant energy"). However, due to the difficulty in extracting and transporting it, coal never became the base of Mexican industry, nor a household fuel. Instead, coal functioned as an "energy bridge" between nineteenth-century wood and water and twentieth-century oil. According to the author, coal also shaped the country's initial "views and expectations about fossil fuels," and, between 1890 and 1910, it sustained "key emerging industrial sectors like steel, smelting, railroads, and electricity generation" (95).

Not surprisingly, petroleum is the energy source that receives the greatest part of Vergara's attention. In the late nineteenth century, kerosene became an important illuminant and