

Part 3 takes a more contemporary, anthropological turn, examining the discourse of union struggles in Hunucmá in a context of 'neo-liberal policies and frameworks of governance' (p. 14), analysing pilgrimages, fiestas and other acts of devotion to the local Virgin of Tetiz, and looking at the idea of *el pueblo* through the texts and experiences of a local poet, historian, activist and teacher. The thread that tries to hold these chapters together is the search to understand the development of historical consciousness of *el pueblo* in Hunucmá and how collective memory is given narrative form as history more broadly. However, the chapters consist of personal experiences, recollections, observations and different discourses and interpretations, which do not easily integrate either with one another or with the previous more empirical historical chapters.

These contradictions stem from the methodological dilemma that is at the heart of the book. On the one hand Eiss conducts historical enquiry based upon empirical research, an 'etic' discipline. On the other hand he freely incorporates opinion, propaganda, stories, memories and myth into the narrative, in order to understand the different ways that contemporary actors thought about events and how they are remembered, an 'emic' approach. Yet these epistemologies do not integrate easily. Furthermore, ultimately by defining history as allegory and using text and symbol as historical evidence, the author tends to undermine much of his empirical research and to privilege speculation and novelesque prose over rational analysis and argument. Consequently, despite some very good research, the result of trying to know *el pueblo* both as something concrete and abstract simultaneously is a book that is inconclusive and lacks a clear argument.

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Paula Alonso, *Jardines secretos, legitimaciones públicas: el Partido Autonomista Nacional y la política argentina de fines del siglo XIX* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2010), pp. 390, pb.

In spite of the paramount influence of the Partido Autonomista Nacional (National Autonomist Party, PAN) in Argentine politics between 1880 and 1916, few academic works have dealt with the building of the PAN political machine and its role in the control of presidential succession from the perspective of the relationships between provincial politics and the presidency. Paula Alonso's book fills that void. She has written a carefully researched and persuasive book on the nature and role of the PAN in national politics between 1880 and 1892.

Alonso's book is divided into eight chapters, plus an introduction and a conclusion, which combine a chronological and diachronic approach to the subject with more analytical sections. The author makes clear early in the book that she is not trying to recount the history of a national party. Rather, the book is an attempt to analyse what Alonso calls 'national politics' through the eyes of the PAN, using this loose national coalition of provincial elites as a 'panopticon' from which, it is argued, a series of features of the Argentine political system can acquire a more definitive shape: the relationship between provincial governments and the national government, the selection process of presidential candidates and the process of centralisation/decentralisation of the federal system. In tune with recent trends in the history of the 'Conservative Order', Alonso describes the party in power as a loosely structured

political organisation with a very low level of institutionalisation and close links with the state apparatus. In the absence of a competitive party system, the opposition groups did not have a clear chance of winning the presidential elections and the PAN, which brought the ruling provincial elites together in a loose political organisation, became the hegemonic political party and the key player in the selection process of presidential candidates.

While some historians have opted to interpret the PAN's internal organisation either as a highly disciplined and hierarchical structure with a degree of territorial penetration or as an institutional framework that enabled circulation in power as the result of informal agreements between elite groups, Alonso argues that it was the 'leagues of governors', the provincial coalitions built to support presidential candidates and which were in constant flux, that provided the basic framework for presidential candidates to build links with provincial politicians who could supply the votes needed in the electoral colleges to win the election. The book stresses the importance of presidential elections in shaping national politics and persuasively challenges more traditional accounts that underlined the centralisation of power in the hands of the president and his decisive role in appointing a successor under his control. Alonso joins other scholars who have made good use of the concept of *gobiernos electores* to examine the internal dynamic of the oligarchic political regime, although she is aware of the risks involved (oversimplification) in the use of an expression that refers to provincial and national governments manufacturing elections and controlling successions by means of generalised administrative electoral fraud. Alonso is also persuaded by some recent literature which has reassessed the economic aspects of the process of state-building during the 1880s and argues that the defeat and federalisation of Buenos Aires in 1880 did not amount to the emergence of an unrivalled national executive able to impose its economic and political policies at will on the provincial governments of that decade. Patronage politics and negotiations between the provincial governments and the president were central to the construction of coalitions, and provincial leaders were sometimes successful in challenging the centralising strategies of *roquismo*. Alonso gives us a vivid account of the financial and political constraints faced by President Julio A. Roca and of the competition that took place between the president's league and the other provincial coalitions for the support of governors for the potential candidates for the 1886 presidential elections. It is true, however, that by the end of Roca's term in office his particular blend of negotiations and interference in provincial affairs had paid off and Roquismo clearly controlled Argentine politics. The book offers a very detailed and dynamic description of this process and perceptively suggests how the *roquista* construction of power could produce potential tensions between a centralising national executive and the principles of representative government and federalism. The author is less convincing, however, when describing the Gran Comité Argentino, built up in support of Dardo Rocha's presidential candidacy in 1886, as a potential first step in the emergence of a modern party system in Argentina (p. 172).

The Revolution of 1890, the financial crisis and the 'Policy of Agreement' brought about significant factional realignments and pressure from anxious politicians to put in place more clearly defined party structures. Alonso rejects the view that PAN politicians decided to adopt a more institutionalised party structure in 1891 because they wanted a more efficient party or representative organisation; in her view it was only the political and economic crisis that forced PAN politicians to espouse a more clear-cut institutionalisation of the party structure. Alonso asserts that while Roca

pursued more centralising policies and resorted to negotiations with the provincial ruling elites whenever possible in order to keep the party united, his successor Juárez Celman adopted a very different strategy. Far from advocating a *juarista* centralising leadership, Alonso argues persuasively that Juárez Celman favoured a decentralising exercise of power by leaving in the hands of his provincial allies and Congress decisions about the expansion of railway tracks and the printing of paper money ('placing economics at the service of politics'), a risky strategy that could only succeed in the context of a booming economy and favourable conditions in financial markets. Alonso also describes how modernist politicians and press, political heirs of *juarismo*, were keen to stress what differentiated them from the Juarista Partido Nacional, Roquismo and *mitrismo*: mainly a particular conviction regarding the importance of setting up party structures and the need to renovate political practices and respect party competition (p. 334). In Alonso's view, the defeat of modernism meant the failure of an alternative political discourse that promoted electoral federalism in opposition to a centralised party structure (p. 345).

Alonso chooses to focus her analysis mainly on a period in which the opposition press accused the national and provincial governments of manufacturing elections, and in which the struggle between leagues of governors within the PAN dominated national politics and backdoor agreements (the secret gardens of politics) were crucial in the process of presidential candidate selection. The book analyses the contribution of the political press in the activity of legitimation and counter-legitimation in which the national government and its opponents embarked in order to strengthen or undermine the legitimacy of those in power in a context of extended electoral malpractice. In so doing, Alonso's analysis shows how newspapers played a key role in defining the political discourse of party factions and contributed to some extent to the enlargement of the domain of national politics and public debate. However, their role in the process of legitimation and counter-legitimation of ruling groups seems most apparent in the city of Buenos Aires, where governments could not ignore public opinion (p. 180).

Alonso's exclusive focus on the presidential elections between 1880 and 1892 opens the door to further research on the relevance of the leagues of governors in the control of presidential successions in the following decades and could lead to further enquiries about the role of *gobiernos electores* in the process of presidential candidate selection in the 1890s, a period in which, as Alonso has suggested in previous works, party competition and electoral competitiveness in the city of Buenos Aires seemed to increase. Paula Alonso has produced an original and important account of the internal dynamics of the PAN that will contribute to our understanding of the long Argentine tradition of hegemonic political parties with low levels of institutionalisation.

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María Inés Tato and Martín O. Castro (eds.), *Del Centenario al peronismo: dimensiones de la vida política argentina* (Buenos Aires: Imago Mundi, 2010), pp. viii + 48, pb.

This collection of essays demonstrates the advances made by the new political history in Argentina. By broadening conventional understandings of what constitutes the