

direction of loss. Ruiz Medrano asserts that pueblos were able to survive in many places and retain control of land because they collectively possessed the necessary survival skills to do so, chief among them what she calls the ideological flexibility that underwrote negotiation in the political sphere and the courts. This seems to me tautological: pueblos survived because they had the skills to do so. Moreover, this putative flexibility can be turned upside down, to be seen as *inflexibility* in the face of changing forms of state power, and of the moral and legal standing of indigenous people and their communities. From this point of view their flexibility looks more like what Steve Stern has called 'resistant adaptation', and the pueblos' negotiation in the service of this inflexibility tactical rather than strategic. Despite these problems of argument, the book has much to offer in the way of carefully, even lovingly, deployed archival evidence and illuminating anecdote, a good account of the changing Mexican legal system as it bore upon indigenous people and their claims to village lands, and an articulate depiction of the broad continuity in their efforts to retain those lands through courts sometimes more sympathetic, sometimes less so.

*University of California, San Diego*

ERIC VAN YOUNG

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Magali M. Carrera, *Traveling from New Spain to Mexico: Mapping Practices of Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. xxi + 325, £67.00, £16.99 pb.

Adding to a growing body of interdisciplinary work on nation-building processes in nineteenth-century Mexico, Magali Carrera's latest book synthesises an in-depth analysis of Antonio García Cubas' cartography with a broad historical overview of visual representations of Mexico from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. As such, *Traveling from New Spain to Mexico* not only offers a sophisticated and holistic reading of García Cubas' visual strategies and narratives that will satisfy the specialist reader, but also provides for the non-specialist an accessible survey of mapping practices and visual cultures of display through which Europeans and, later, Mexicans understood the Americas, the colony of New Spain, and the Mexican nation in different historical epochs.

The introduction establishes the accessible tone of the work as a whole, giving an overview of existing scholarship on cartography, art history, and visual culture in the nineteenth century, as well as discussing the theoretical and methodological foundations of the book. The key principle of Carrera's approach is that mapping practices do not produce static images that reflect some knowable reality, but instead constitute a shifting complex of spatial, cultural and conceptual representations. Chapters 1 and 2 together chart how New Spain was mapped, imagined, represented and displayed during the colonial era. Chapter 1 deals primarily with French, Dutch and English representations, which recurrently associated the Americas as a whole with particular visual tropes: nudity or semi-nudity; barbarous natives; rich and plentiful lands and resources; and strange or monstrous flora and fauna. In the eighteenth century, tomes of natural history, cabinets of curiosity and philosophical travellers helped to incorporate an overall interpretation of New Spain into the universal schemas of European intellectuals. In this interpretation, figures such as Raynal, de Pauw, Buffon and Robertson viewed New Spain 'as a basically degenerate place, yet one that offered abundant resources' (p. 36).

Chapter 2, meanwhile, charts the different trajectory of Spanish and later *criollo* visions of New Spain. Driven predominantly by the Crown, Spanish mappings of New Spain tended to be more instrumentalist than those of other Europeans. Carrera discusses in rich detail the *reales cédulas* and *relaciones geográficas*, large questionnaires or surveys, from which the Spanish Crown gathered information on the physical geography, demography, resources, commerce, local history, ethnography and other features of particular areas. The resultant mass of primary data was typically synthesised into descriptive texts, maps and other images to assist with the administration of the colonies. In the eighteenth century an emerging *criollo* discourse also began to carve out a physical, cultural and conceptual identity for New Spain as a unique place.

Carrera then provides a survey of the strategies of visualisation used by foreign travel writers in the nineteenth century, and charts the changes in Mexican visual culture occasioned by independence and state-making objectives. Both developments were facilitated by new technologies in the reproduction of images, including lithography, daguerreotyping and photography, and both were marked by new techniques of display, such as pocket travel books, museums, dioramas, panoramas, exhibitions and, in Mexico, a dramatically augmented print culture. Foreign travel accounts and state-sponsored publications and exhibitions were also engaged in formulating ideas about, and images of, Mexican nationhood and national character.

Chapters 5 and 6 together constitute the substantive analysis of Antonio García Cubas' cartographic work. Among his earliest works, Carrera identifies the influence of previous European cartographic traditions, the repertoire of mobile images displaying a Mexican identity that featured in nineteenth-century visual culture, and the guided itinerary structure of contemporary travel narratives. In the aftermath of the French Intervention (1861–67), García Cubas' work became more pedagogical in nature, concerned with teaching a nationalist geography and correcting the supposed misrepresentations of Mexico that foreign intellectuals had made. Particularly fascinating is Carrera's discussion of *The Republic of Mexico in 1876* (La Enseñanza, 1876), which combined a historical narrative for Mexico, starting with the pre-Columbian civilisations, with a geographical and cultural narrative that organised Mexican society, economy and demography in regional and racial terms.

In Chapter 6, Carrera's equally insightful discussion of *Atlas pintoresco é historico de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos* (Mexico City: Debray, 1885) shows how the different strands of the cartographer's work coalesced during the Porfiriato, an era generally marked by the proliferation and intensification of displaying practices. The *Atlas pintoresco* used visual signifiers of Mexican nationhood common to other contemporary and previous works, including archaeological sites and artefacts, historical figures, social types, and images of commercial and industrial activity, but these were presented through a highly structured visual narrative that presented a long and continuous trajectory of Mexican history, and offered multiple views of Mexico's physical, political, ethnographical, economic, historic and intellectual features 'to inspire citizens' and 'to export to the international stage' (p. 225). The book concludes with a speculative exploration of the 1910 centennial celebrations, in which the compendium of images, modes of display, historical narratives and markers of progress that came to define Antonio García Cubas' work were performed in parades, pageants and exhibitions.

The final chapters of the book also make reference to some of the silences contained within García Cubas' mapping practices. This was an intriguing issue, which could

have been afforded more space for discussion. As Carrera has undertaken such an insightful and thorough contextualisation of García Cubas' work within historical, national and international visual traditions, it would have been useful to have a more comprehensive analysis of the silences that operated in nineteenth-century visual culture in general to set against those in García Cubas' work. Nevertheless, the elegant sweep of visual history within which Carrera places sophisticated readings of the Mexican cartographer's participation in nation-building discourse is a considerable achievement indeed. The extensively illustrated text and accessible prose will encourage specialist and non-specialist readers alike to get inside the visual narratives created by García Cubas in mapping his many Mexicos.

*Institute for the Study of the Americas, University of London*

DEBORAH TONER

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Jill Hedges, *Argentina: A Modern History* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011), pp. xvii + 317, £29.50, hb.

In *Argentina: A Modern History* Jill Hedges presents a brief and concise history of Argentina covering a period reaching from colonial times to Cristina Kirchner's first presidency. The book is divided into 13 chapters. The narrative strategy to compress this long history into fewer than 300 pages is to describe every presidency, with each section analysing the political and economic characteristics of one or various presidencies. In all cases the author explains in detail the context in which the presidential changes were produced, and the consequences of those transitions. The chapters present the reader with specific data on economic policies and political developments. The author also offers meticulous insights on the positions, calculations, careers and backgrounds of the ruling leaders. This means that *Argentina: A Modern History* emphasises the role taken by political elites in setting up the path of the country. The fact that five of the 13 chapters are dedicated to Peronism is not fortuitous. In the introduction to the volume the author states that the book will devote considerable space to this political phenomenon 'in a bid to explain a historical movement which has successfully reinvented itself over time to represent the changing aspirations of large sectors of society' (p. xvii). In order to fulfil this aim Hedges sketches the social and economic changes that preceded the rise of Perón and links them to the vote for him. She portrays the alliance of the working classes with Perón as a rational move, as the latter provided subaltern sectors with tangible, as well symbolic, benefits. Although she highlights the fact that this regime represented a watershed in Argentina's history, Hedges concludes that the rise of Perón marked 'neither the end of oligarchic exploitation ... nor the birth of a revolutionary new Argentina' (p. 116). At the same time, the author devotes significant attention to the personal biographies of both Eva and Juan Domingo Perón. From chapter 9 onwards, Hedges describes the political events that followed the end of Perón's government. She closes the book stating that in the present day certain approaches of Argentine political thinking, namely 'short-termism, personal gain and zero sum attitudes', remained untouched, undermining 'any prospect of unpopular reform that might bring long-term benefit' (p. 291).

The book provides a chronological and extensive account that would be helpful to readers who are looking for a factual history of Argentina. However, this monograph would be less useful for those who expect a more critical and nuanced history.