

citadels of patriotic Liberalism. McNamara shows how in the Sierra de Ixtlán, as in the southern Puebla sierra, ‘all men had the opportunity to join the National Guard, and all men could claim to have played an important role in defending the nation’ (p. 37).

Although Zapotec community leaders acted as company commanders, overall political and military control of the Sierra de Ixtlán belonged to a small clutch of non-indigenous mining and commercial families: the Hernández, the Castro, and, most prominently, the Meijueiro. There was no Zapotec equivalent to Juan Francisco Lucas, Nahua ‘patriarch’ of the Puebla sierra. But there were plenty of renowned local indigenous leaders, such as Felipe García of Guelatao (Juárez’s birthplace), whose signatures and reminders of patriotic services (García was still petitioning in 1903, aged 96), added significant weight to the village petitions that continually made their way to Díaz’s office in Mexico City during his regime. In deference to the literary turn in history, McNamara dwells more on the rhetoric of these petitions and on the identities of those who drafted and delivered them than on conventional military and political narrative. Nevertheless, this is a beautifully written and succinct book which succeeds in contributing many regional nuances to our understanding of sixty years of Mexico’s Liberal revolution.

By the turn of the twentieth century these local strategies of appealing to Liberal paternalism by invoking a common patriotic history had become attenuated as a new generation of mestizo entrepreneurs with no direct memory of the glorious Liberal-patriotic past sought greater control over the resources of the sierra. Conflicts also mounted within and between communities; over land, the control of village labour, over who should be custodian of Juárez’s memory, and, not least, over elections. In the face of Madero’s uprising, Díaz ordered Fidencio Hernández and Guillermo Meijueiro, scions of the great mid-nineteenth century Liberal caciques of the Sierra, to come to his aid by re-establishing the Ixtlán battalion that he had first mustered in 1855. They agreed, but made the mistake of bypassing village elders and arming young indigenous men. With the fall of Díaz, the delicate inter-ethnic balance sustained by a long tradition of cooperation between mestizo entrepreneurs and indigenous communities broke down as Zapotec *principales* took to arms in the Ixtepeji rebellion of 1912. The solidarities and identities that had grown up around the National Guard fifty years earlier, and which had served to underscore a degree of reciprocity between villages and higher authorities throughout the Porfiriato, could not easily be restored. Oaxaca’s political elites decided to shut the Revolution out rather than to allow it to deepen these divisions.

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Marie Eileen Francois, *A Culture of Everyday Credit: Housekeeping, Pawnbroking and Governance in Mexico City, 1750–1920* (Lincoln, NE, and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), pp. xiii + 415, £22.95, pb.

When we think of pawn shops in the contemporary Anglophone world, they bring to mind characters teetering precariously on the economic margins, hanging on by their fingernails, driven to desperation by vice or devastation. However, Marie Eileen Francois’ lively narrative of pawnbroking in Mexico City in the ‘long’ nineteenth century reveals a world that involved more women and more members of the

bourgeoisie than we might imagine. The typical lender, throughout the period under consideration, was a Spanish merchant who also often operated retail outlets. The typical borrower was a woman, perhaps a widow or a domestic servant acting at her employer's behest, seeking to keep her household from slipping down a rung on the social ladder. A family heirloom or a newly acquired piano functioned as both status symbol and insurance policy, available as collateral to borrow money for other markers of class respectability. Indeed, as Francois points out, New Spain's Monte de Piedad departed from its paradigms in Spain and Italy by catering to the middle sectors and waning nobility, rather than to the indigent.

Francois' study joins a growing list of English-language scholarship on the history of Mexico City, building on work by Katherine Bliss, John Lear, Pablo Picatto, Patience Schell, and others, as well as extensive Mexican scholarship. Investigating the commonplace practice of pawning, Francois makes three important contributions: she demonstrates the quotidian practice of what Charles Hale dubbed Mexico's 'pragmatic liberalism', she tracks changes in material culture as a reflection of social dynamics, and she demonstrates that pawning constituted a fundamental survival strategy for most Mexico City residents. Francois shows us that pawning, including both small-scale, private-sector exchanges and the large-scale, publicly governed Monte de Piedad, formed part of an 'everyday culture of credit' that played a critical role in Mexico's economic stability and development, particularly at the level of households.

Francois combines social science and literary methods to produce rich descriptions of pawning experiences. Each chapter opens with a vignette, but the author shores up these anecdotes with extensive analysis of pawnshop records, regulatory debates, and census records. In addition to the 27 tables that appear in the text, 33 pages of appendices follow the epilogue. However, Francois seems ambivalent about her hard-earned statistical information, citing it as fact even as she points out lacunae in data collection.

Nonetheless, Francois' deft deployment of sources ranging from census records and account books to satire and board games renders an important contribution to our understanding of the relationships between high politics and lived experience. In particular, this 'culture of everyday credit' constrained liberal ambitions to deregulate quotidian credit markets. Much in the way that Pamela Voekel's examination of burial practices revealed the 'enlightened piety' that pervaded purportedly secular liberalism, Francois' exploration of pawnbroking exposes the paradoxes of pragmatic liberalism. Liberals sought minimal government, but also social reform; they wanted unfettered commerce, but required greater tax revenues; they were simultaneously cosmopolitans and nationalists. Furthermore, Francois shows us one compelling reason for popular classes (including the 'modest middle class') to have supported conservative politicians: conservatives supported anti-usury regulations while liberals consistently called for removing caps on interest rates, leaving them to whatever the market would bear or necessity allowed.

Francois argues for understanding class in cultural rather than material terms. Citing Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* and E. P. Thompson's analysis of class as a process, she asserts that 'these fluid conceptualizations of social class push beyond simple measures such as occupation or income level to include ethnic and gendered identities, material manifestations, physical and social spaces – in short, cultural reproduction' (p. 5). Throughout this study, Francois highlights women's centrality to maintaining class status, through their roles in consuming and producing for

households. The performance of class standing, at least in nineteenth-century Mexico, often required artful financing through recourse to pawn shops, leading women of a range of social classes to line up outside the Monte de Piedad or to bargain with neighbourhood pawnbrokers in hopes that a well embroidered tablecloth might serve as collateral for a week's worth of groceries.

Francois' *Annales* School-inspired periodisation allows us to see the impact of changing social and cultural practices, such as the declining importance of dowries or the increased use of watches and clocks, over the *longue durée*, as she traces continuities and changes through the volatile periods from the Bourbon reforms, through the independence wars, topsy-turvy nineteenth-century politics, the Porfirian dictatorship, and, finally, the revolution. Given the central role of pawning in Mexico City's household economies, its changing laws and practices offer a useful gauge of how ordinary people experienced these historic moments. In the private sector, for example, the colonial practice of combining pawn shops with corner retail establishments (*pulperías*), which allowed more humble customers to pawn used clothing for food or other merchandise, gave way to the separation of *casas de empeño* during the early national period as pawnbrokers offered cash to clients. Many of these pawnshops then yielded to the Porfirian creation of bazaars, which required the complete alienation of an object from its owner. A widow seeking to retain middle-class status by hocking her silver service during times of need would, instead, have to sell it off and live from the proceeds.

The book's ambitious temporal scope creates a structural dilemma. Francois divides her study into pairs of chapters covering long sweeps of time, examining the experiences first of borrowers and of lenders during the periods 1750–1840, 1850–1875, and the Porfiriato. Within these chapters, the discussion moves back and forth across tumultuous sweeps of history, generating uncertainty about chronologies and trends. Only the final chapter, on the revolutionary decade, integrates these two perspectives, avoiding the redundancies and confusions that inevitably arise from the earlier structure of paired chapters. The extensive appendices and explanatory footnotes (in lieu of a bibliography) contribute to the problem of having to flip through the book's pages to keep track of the narrative. These minor quibbles aside, this book makes an important contribution to our understanding of the history of Mexico, pragmatic liberalism, and the importance of household economics.

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John E. Stealey III (ed.), *Porte Crayon's Mexico: David Hunter Strother's Diaries in the Early Porfirian Era, 1879–1885* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2006), pp. xv + 1085, \$65.00, hb.

To scholars of Porfirian Mexico, Porte Crayon is not the most recognisable name. As the pen-name of the US consul-general, David Hunter Strother, it nevertheless struck a chord among American readers for his many contributions to the *Harper's* publications in the 1850s and 1860s. Strother won his diplomatic appointment under the Hayes administration and served US interests during the formative years of the Porfiriato from 1879 to 1885. This large volume collects the observations that he recorded in his daily journal.