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, 1830–1875, 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.

Anyone who has surveyed the extensive number of nineteenth-century travel accounts of Mexico will agree with editor John E. Stealey's assertion that Strother achieved the best of the genre. An accomplished artist and art critic, Strother had a remarkable eye for detail and superior ability to render picturesque scenes in words. His journal entries were written for his own personal edification. But he had hoped to recapture his previous literary fame by publishing a definitive travelogue that would have anticipated and perhaps precluded dozens of hopelessly unoriginal narratives of the high Porfiriato. Strother died before he realised this ambition, but his legacy survives in his Mexican diaries. Stealey's scholarly introduction, prefaces to 34 well-organised chapters, informational footnotes, and biographical and documentary appendixes help make this an invaluable contribution to nineteenth-century Mexican history. Scholars will appreciate the accessibility, affordability and authority of this hefty edition.

Like primary source evidence in general, researchers must search through a bushel of chaff to find a peck of useful data in Strother's diaries. Faithful to retaining the voice of the original author, Stealey left little on the cutting room floor. What remains is a combination of the wondrous and mundane. While the US minister to Mexico, John W. Foster, eclipses Strother as an historical figure, Strother played a significant role in securing US recognition of the Díaz regime and representing the interests of American citizens and émigrés in Mexico. The raw data and notes that he used in his consular despatches do not always appear in his private journal. Instead, the reader comes to understand the demanding work and social obligations of the office. The diary reads like the *Who's Who* of Porfirian Mexico as high officials in the Mexican government and foreign diplomatic corps flow in and out of the agent's life. Brief encounters lead to 'off-the-record' vignettes of Mexican politicians. General Juan N. Méndez was 'a pure blooded Aztec and Chief of the Pueblanos … [who] had a dark visage with snow white head and beard – stout and imposing mein', (p. 69) and Manuel González was a 'short & rather prissy figure' (p. 315).

The major political events of Porfirio Díaz's first term and the financial problems of the González interregnum (1880–1884) rarely escaped Porte Crayon's attention. His eyewitness accounts of Ulysses S. Grant's visit and the street-level unrest of the Nickel Riots and English Debt Crisis are unsurpassed. His comments capture both the improvisational nature of Gonzalez's fiscal policies and the anger and frustration of the urban masses whom they affected most. In addition, Strother toured the Pachuca silver mines and the sugar plantations of Morelos, as well as interacting with the armed retainers and factory workers of the massive Fábrica de Hercules in Querétaro. His commentary that Mexico's feudal structure prevented it from modernising is insightful. Even a Japanese servant told him 'labor here was so cheap that they couldn't afford to use machinery' (p. 225). The consul-general was also keenly aware of the overbearing presence of the United States, at least until the arrival of the new British minister, Sir Spencer St John, who thought 'Mexico will never amount to much until well salted by Anglo Saxon Blood' (p. 605).

The longest entries of Strother's diary describe natural landscapes and people and are similar to those found in the best turn-of the-century travel accounts. Indeed, Strother had a flair for the romantic, which places the Virginia gentleman in the company of Mexico City's great chroniclers. Together with his son John, he walked the streets of the capital, revelled in their astonishment at the Day of the Dead toys, and expressed their fascination with the bullfights in Puebla. On his travels outside

the city, the diarist rarely took his surroundings for granted and provided vivid and timeless descriptions of his subjects: 'The women [of Patzcuaro] have a distinctive Costume, a blue woolin [sic] shirt thickly plaited with a red sash & white cotton chemise embroidered around neck and sleeves with red or blue woolen yarn. They weave & embroider rebosas, sashes, serapes & other goods in the town & we saw them at work with their handloom' (p. 877).

While Strother expressed his love and appreciation for Mexico, his diaries teach us how precarious life was in the capital city. As administrator of the American Cemetery, he attended funerals, and recorded deaths by murder, accident and illness. He witnessed assaults, the aftermath of an attempted suicide, and the horrible deaths of matadors and picadors gored at the bullfights. Moreover, he reported on duels, fist-fights, executions and assassinations. In his pages, cholera and typhus snuffed out children young and old; the stable-mate of his son, John, was there one day and dead the next. Strother's routine encounters with death led to a casual attitude toward the violence, alcoholism, poverty and human suffering all around him.

Porte Crayon's diaries stand alone in providing a continuous stream of useful information at a time when just a few foreign journalists, businessmen and tourists recorded fleeting impressions of their month-long trips. Uniquely, Strother was the right person in the right place at the right time to witness Porfirian Mexico in the making. His strong habits of mind, multilingualism, and cosmopolitan outlook equipped him to record memorable first-hand observations, but never earned him the recognition he deserved. Thankfully, Stealey and Strother's own descendants redress this misfortune.

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Kenneth P. Serbin, *Needs of the Heart: A Social and Cultural History of Brazil's Clergy and Seminaries* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), pp. xix + 476, $60.00, hb.

Kenneth Serbin's book delivers precisely what its subtitle advertises: a thorough history of the Catholic priesthood in Brazil. Based on over twenty years of research, including visits to seminaries and theological institutes in ten Brazilian states, as well as more than 150 interviews with clergy and important lay persons, the book offers new perspective on topics that students of Brazil (and Latin America) have been debating for some time. In particular, by focusing on priests, and connecting their experience to broader socio-political dynamics, Professor Serbin enriches the stories of liberation theology and of the role played by the Catholic Church in promoting democracy and social justice. Equally significant, he takes seriously the non-material influence that priests and the Church have in Brazilian life. As Serbin rightly notes, the clergy have been, and continue to be, important actors in Latin America and around the world. Yet they are not well understood. *Needs of the Heart* goes a long way toward remedying this deficiency.

The book's organisational scheme is essentially chronological and takes as its pivotal point the early 1960s, which witnessed the second Vatican Council and the beginning of Brazil's military dictatorship. The first half of the book, which basically covers the period prior to 1962, offers a thorough socio-economic assessment of Brazil's clergy during the colonial period; a survey of the Brazilian Church's