sindicatos) or Loyola Díaz (the decline of radicalism) or Servín (Henriquismo) appear. Gillingham and Smith's recent *Dictablanda* is mentioned, but there is no reference to the crucial political changes initiated by Alemán – not least in his home state of Veracruz – by way of eliminating internal (PRI) primaries and imposing central executive control. Indeed, throughout the book, grassroots politics figures very little and the Church not at all; while the political schmoozing of the PRI elite – often as recalled and recounted by that elite – takes centre stage. In short, while this book offers some useful information about a key political figure – and the cronies who surrounded him – and, in doing so, sheds light on postwar Mexican politics, its unbalanced and often uncritical use of sources, coupled with its oddly charitable take on Alemán himself, and its neglect of political economy, all detract from the cogency of the interpretation.

Finally, while the style is clear and jargon-free, it is often wordy and inelegant. Organised labour viewed the post-1945 scenario 'as an aperture into renewed activity' – later, it becomes 'an aperture which spurred the working class' (p. 12, 91). The official party 'expanded into an expansive corporatist entity'; Alemán 'did attempt some half-hearted attempt to reform the tax system' (pp. 45, 85). Several minor queries arise. 'Pacifist' does not mean 'peaceful' (here applied to a street demonstration) (p. 42). Alemán in 1946 was hardly 'the undisputed figurehead of national politics': his authority was disputed – which is why he purged the Left – and he was certainly no 'figurehead' (p. 48). The students who blew up Alemán's statue in the UNAM campus in 1968 did not wantonly 'vandalise' it (97, 113); they were making a reasonable political protest. Mexico has never been a 'single-party' state (pp. 4, 6, 7). The place where Alemán's father was killed – Mata de Aguacatillo – derives from '*mata*' (a 'bush'), not 'the slaughter [*matanza*?] at Aguacatillo' (p. 25). As students, Alemán and his cronies did not name their magazine '*Eureka*' because of 'their desire to discover new possibilities' (p. 33), but by pure accident (Alemán himself tells us). Uruchurto should be Uruchurtu, Hueyapam de Ocampos should be Hueyapan de Ocampo (pp. 26, 62). 'Proscribe' is the opposite of 'prescribe' (p. 35). Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (b. 1651) was not a 'sixteenth century' nun (p. 35). The author refers to 'two maritime invasions' of revolutionary Mexico launched by the United States (p. 67), but I am aware of only one (Veracruz, 1914). Several footnotes, citing archive and date but not document number, are plainly inadequate, as are references to entire books when a single quote is involved (e.g., p. 223 n. 81, p. 224 n. 9). Lastly, the author insists on parading his sensitivity: economic 'developments', when they are not 'disturbing', are recurrently 'troubling' (pp. 11, 12, 54, 89); as are the Cold War and Alemán's labour policy (pp. 17, 157). On the other hand, aspects of PRIísta policy are 'appealing', 'laudable', and 'admirable' (pp. 7–8, 179). *Pace* Lord Acton, I hardly think such authorial finger-wagging and backslapping enhance our historical understanding.

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Guy Pierre, *La Crise de 1929 et le développement du capitalisme en Haïti: Une perspective de longue durée et une conjoncture perdue* (Montreal: Les Éditions du CIDIHCA, 2015), pp. 548, pb.

Guy Pierre, a Haitian historian who now lives in Mexico, has written a remarkable book. Although ostensibly about the impact of the Great Depression on Haiti, it is

in fact an economic history of the country covering the period from the mid-nineteenth century to the Second World War. In so doing, he has rendered a great service and has greatly improved our understanding of the Haitian economy. Although published relatively recently, the book was first conceived in the 1980s and Pierre has been working on it ever since. It is a testament to the value of intense research and deep scholarship.

Pierre sees the Great Depression as one of the many business cycles to which capitalism has been subject and starts his work with a detailed exegesis on the different theoretical approaches that economists have taken to the subject. He sees Haitian economic development as subject to these different cycles and the Great Depression as one, among many, which have hit the country hard. It is hard to disagree with this, especially as the Great Depression may not even have been the worst externally induced cycle from which Haiti has suffered.

Pierre's starting point (1848/9) is particularly appropriate as it marks the beginning of the long political rule of Faustin-Élie Soulouque, who declared himself Emperor as Faustin I two years after assuming the presidency in 1847. It is also the moment, however, when any hopes that Haiti might have had of re-establishing its economy on the basis of sugar exports were ended. Although sugar exports had been the basis of the French colony of Saint Domingue, all efforts to revive them after the establishment of Haiti as an independent country in 1804 failed.

Instead, Haiti built its economy on the basis of four exports, one of which – coffee – would come to dominate all others. Thus, the cycles in the Haitian economy revolved around the coffee sector and, in particular, the world price over which Haiti had no control. These coffee exports paid for almost all imports and the customs duties on exports and imports then provided 99 per cent of government revenue, making the Haitian state especially vulnerable to what happened to the world price of coffee.

Haitian economic history has been frustrated by the lack of easily accessible data on the most important statistics. This has led to wild exaggerations and generalisations about Haiti based on little more than prejudice and ignorance. Pierre goes to extraordinary lengths to track down the data needed to fill the gaps in the historiography and, in so doing, has demonstrated that much of Haitian history needs to be rewritten.

The book covers the long US military occupation from 1915 to 1934, which of course coincided with the Great Depression. Although Haiti was allowed to preserve the veneer of independence, in practice all important decisions were taken by the occupying power including the management of the economy. By prioritising payment of the public debt, and ruling out default, the US authorities deprived Haiti of the flexibility enjoyed by other Latin American governments during the Great Depression. Worse, by insisting on the maintenance of a fixed exchange rate, the US Financial Adviser placed the Haitian state in an impossible position.

Pierre's book contains a number of fascinating letters from representatives of the Haitian state to their overlords in Washington DC. One written on 29 September 1931, at the height of the economic crisis, pleads with the US State Department not to insist on cutting public sector jobs to balance the budget for fear of 'condamner à la fin ou à la mort des citoyens haïtiens' ('condemning some Haitians to a deadly end', p. 453). The reply is not included in the book, but all scholars are in agreement that the harsh treatment given to Haiti during the US occupation was a leading factor in the rise of 'Papa Doc' Duvalier a few years later.

The US Marines were withdrawn in 1934, but US oversight continued until 1947. Pierre is particularly informative on this period, when it is widely but incorrectly

assumed that Haiti had regained its sovereignty. And all chapters are buttressed by a wide array of tables and figures from little-known sources that are conveniently presented at the end. All in all, it is an outstanding book and deserves to be translated into English and/or Spanish as soon as possible.

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Donna Guy, *Creating Charismatic Bonds in Argentina: Letters to Juan and Eva Perón* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2016), pp. vii + 173, $95.00, $29.95 pb.

The difficulties of historical research in Argentina are well known: a national archive that has in the past suffered neglect, flooding, lack of financial resources and the attentions of hungry rats; other archives that are sometimes widely dispersed, sporadically maintained and haphazardly filed; and, in the case of the 1946–55 Peronist government, the efforts of the *Revolución Libertadora* that overthrew Juan D. Perón in 1955. In its enthusiasm for expunging all traces of Peronism, many valuable documents, photographs and other records were lost, to say nothing of the hospitals, schools and installations of the Eva Perón Foundation that succumbed to neglect or outright destruction. In this context, it is often assumed that no records remain of the myriad letters sent to Juan and Eva Perón, both to the Foundation and in response to government calls for public participation in Perón's two five-year plans.

As Donna Guy notes, the slightly haphazard filing system of national archives may have proved a blessing in this case, with letters coming to light in government ministries and other files. While it may never be possible to find more than a representative sample of these letters – or to know how they were dealt with, as many lack follow-up documentation – this is nevertheless a valuable contribution to our insights into the Peronist government and its correspondents. These correspondents' letters solicited both help and favours, and offered suggestions that were at times incorporated into government policy. They facilitated 'charismatic bonds' and also underscored the reciprocal nature of relations between leaders and followers – relations that could be described as 'patron–client' but which also reflect the very real belief that those in power had an obligation to provide personal benefits for their people. Clearly these correspondents believed that they were within their rights to ask for those benefits from Perón and Evita, and the content of these letters is fascinating.

As Guy rightly points out, Perón and Evita were not the first Argentine leaders to encourage letter-writing from the citizenry. This was an accepted form even under Spanish rule, with the illiterate making use of the services of notaries or other officials. But from the mid-nineteenth century in particular, with the focus on public education under Presidents Domingo F. Sarmiento (1868–74) and Nicolás Avellaneda (1874–80), written correspondence became more common. Under Hipólito Yrigoyen (1916–22; 1928–30), the poor were encouraged to write to the president, who was known for philanthropic activities and received petitioners personally even when president. Yrigoyen operated both individually and through the Sociedad de Beneficencia, the publicly subsidised charity set up by Bernardino Rivadavia in 1823 to offer social provision for the needy, and which later became notorious as Evita's *bête noire*, a group of society ladies who purportedly humiliated the poor in their charge and used the Sociedad as a conduit for social events and Catholic piety.