

## CULTURE, POWER, AND SOCIETY IN COLONIAL MEXICO\*

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- A PLAGUE OF SHEEP: ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO.* By Elinor G. K. Melville. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Pp. 203. \$54.95 cloth.)
- MEMORY, MYTH, AND TIME IN MEXICO: FROM THE AZTECS TO INDEPENDENCE.* By Enrique Florescano. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994. Pp. 282. \$32.50 cloth, \$14.95 paper.)
- OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE: THE ORIGINS AND SOURCES OF A MEXICAN NATIONAL SYMBOL, 1531–1797.* By Stafford Poole, C. M. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995. Pp. 325. \$40.00 cloth.)
- MEXICAN MANUSCRIPT PAINTING OF THE EARLY COLONIAL PERIOD: THE METROPOLITAN SCHOOLS.* By Donald Robertson. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994. Pp. 234. \$29.50 paper.)
- THE LIMITS OF RACIAL DOMINATION: PLEBEIAN SOCIETY IN COLONIAL MEXICO CITY, 1660–1720.* By Robert Douglas Cope. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994. Pp. 220. \$48.50 cloth, \$17.95 paper.)
- THE SECRET HISTORY OF GENDER: WOMEN, MEN, AND POWER IN LATE COLONIAL MEXICO.* By Steve J. Stern. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995. Pp. 478. \$29.95 cloth.)
- THE LEGAL CULTURE OF NORTHERN NEW SPAIN, 1700–1810.* By Charles R. Cutter. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995. Pp. 227. \$39.95 cloth.)
- CHURCH AND STATE IN BOURBON MEXICO: THE DIOCESE OF MICHOACAN, 1749–1810.* By D. A. Brading. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Pp. 300. \$59.95 cloth.)

The past decade has witnessed an expanding literature on the social history of colonial Mexico. In particular, historians have paid increasing attention to three distinct but related issues: studies of traditionally voiceless and marginal groups in colonial Mexico, social and cultural

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processes, and relationships between the colonial state and society.<sup>1</sup> The scholarly literature divides roughly into two categories (although considerable crosscutting and overlap exist between the two). The first, an impressive corpus of ethnohistorical studies (building on the studies of the 1970s and the 1980s), has transformed our understanding of indigenous society in colonial Mexico by exploring indigenous agency and cultural conflict and continuities in the context of Spanish domination and colonialism.<sup>2</sup> A second corpus of works has focused on the ebb and flow of daily life in colonial Mexico, emphasizing topics such as the family, marriage and private life, work routines, crime, gender, sexuality, and honor and has demonstrated growing sensitivity to discourses and documents as “texts.” Scholars have also sought to explore the lives of “ordinary people” through their daily engagement with forms of colonial power and the ways in which they deflected, avoided, or manipulated such engagement to fit their own needs.<sup>3</sup>

1. See Eric Van Young, “Recent Anglophone Scholarship on Mexico and Central America in the Age of Revolution,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 65, no. 4 (1985):725–44. Here he argued that more research could profitably be done by historians on the popular classes, Indian and non-Indian, and that much could be gained by developing approaches to *mentalités*, working from the material and the behavioral to the symbolic, the ideological, and the affective. See also Van Young’s more recent reflections on mentalities and cultural history, “Mentalities and Collectivities: A Comment,” in *Patterns of Contention in Mexican History*, edited by Jaime Rodríguez O. (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1992), 337–53; and Van Young, “Conclusion: The State as Vampire—Hegemonic Projects, Public Ritual, and Popular Culture in Mexico, 1600–1900,” in *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico*, edited by William H. Beezley, Cheryl English Martin, and William B. French (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1994), 343–74. See also the penetrating essay by William B. Taylor, “Between Global Process and Local Knowledge: An Inquiry into Early Latin American Social History, 1500–1900,” in *Reliving the Past: The Worlds of Social History*, edited by Olivier Zunz (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985). Here Taylor argued for a more “connected history” of early Latin America that would pay closer attention to the study of social change over long periods of time. This kind of history would demand closer examination of the “special importance of the state in the social history of early Latin America in terms of relationships and structures that mediated between local groups and global processes, relationships and structures that often were hidden behind what would appear on a chart of offices and duties” (p. 165). Also useful in thinking about local and global formations is Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, “From the Margins,” *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (1994):279–97.

2. For two succinct overviews of recent literature, see Janine Gasco, “Recent Trends in Ethnohistoric Research on Postclassic and Colonial Central Mexico,” *LARR* 29, no. 1 (1994): 132–42; and John Kicza, “Recent Books on Ethnohistory and Ethnic Relations in Colonial Mexico,” *LARR* 30, no. 3 (1995):239–53.

3. A representative sampling includes Patricia Seed, *To Love, Honor, and Obey in Colonial Mexico: Conflicts over Marriage Choice, 1574–1821* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1988); *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America*, edited by Asunción Lavrin (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), especially the essays on colonial Mexico by Lavrin, Ruth Behar, Richard Boyer, Thomas Calvo, and Serge Gruzinski; Ramón A. Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500–1846* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991); *Familias novohispanas, siglos XVI–XIX*,

Ongoing dialogues between social history and cultural anthropology and more tentatively with the variants of poststructuralism and subaltern studies have served to historicize culture, community, and *mentalités* of subordination even more.<sup>4</sup> As a result, the most recent approaches reflect an expanded analytical repertoire that now includes explorations of the politics of identity and memory, ritual and ceremony, and the shaping of popular political culture and the sites of cultural struggle and change among indigenous and nonindigenous communities.<sup>5</sup> Despite recent debates about the meaning, uses, and abuses of cultural hegemony, scholars have also turned more to a Gramscian framework in which to examine power relations in colonial Mexico. But they have not adopted the concept uncritically, attempting in particular to compensate for Antonio Gramsci's inattention to constructions of gender relations.<sup>6</sup> While consid-

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edited by Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1991); and more recently Richard Boyer, *Lives of the Bigamists: Marriage, Family, and Community in Colonial Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995). For examples of works that have examined ways in which subordinate groups engage, deflect, or otherwise modify colonial policies and practices, see Juan Pedro Viqueira Albán, *¿Relajados o reprimidos? Diversiones públicas y vida social en la Ciudad de México durante el Siglo de las Luces* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1987); Doris Ladd, *The Making of a Strike: Mexican Silver Workers' Struggles in Real del Monte, 1766–1775* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988); Solange Alberro, *Inquisición y sociedad en México, 1571–1700* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988); Susan Deans-Smith, *Bureaucrats, Planters, and Workers: The Making of the Tobacco Monopoly in Bourbon Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992); and Cheryl English Martin, *Governance and Society in Colonial Mexico: Chihuahua in the Eighteenth Century* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996).

4. Scholarly reactions in general (not just among Latin American colonial historians) range along a spectrum from hostility to critical engagement to indifference. On the "linguistic turn," see Eric Van Young's comments in "The Cuautla Lazarus: Double Subjectives in Reading Texts on Popular Collective Action," *Colonial Latin American Review* 2, nos. 1–2 (1993): 3–26. Also see Patricia Seed's discussion of the revival of politics and the concerns with language, rhetoric, and representation of "the Other" raised in studies of colonial discourse in "Colonial and Postcolonial Discourse," *LARR* 26, no. 3 (1991):181–200; Florencia Mallon, "The Promise and Dilemma of Subaltern Studies: Perspectives from Latin American History," *American Historical Review* (1994):1491–1515; and the essays in *The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America*, edited by John Beverley and José Oviedo (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993).

5. Examples include Serge Gruzinski's discussion of the transformation of indigenous memory in *The Conquest of Mexico: The Incorporation of Indian Societies into the Western World, 16th–18th Centuries* (Oxford: Polity, 1993); David Frye, *Indians into Mexicans: History and Identity in a Mexican Town* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996); the essays in Beezley et al., *Rituals of Rule*; and Francisco Javier Cevallos-Candau, Jeffrey A. Cole, Nina M. Scott, and Nicómedes Suárez-Aráuz, *Coded Encounters: Writing, Gender, and Ethnicity in Colonial Latin America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994).

6. See for example the stimulating discussions of hegemony in *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*, edited by Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994), especially William Roseberry, "Hegemony and the Language of Contention," 355–66, 361. The processual and trans-

erable debate is still going on among scholars over the relevance of “the state,” it seems to be sneaking in through the back door of cultural hegemony via a general shift in attention from the culture and politics of resistance to the culture and politics of hegemony.<sup>7</sup>

The studies reviewed in this essay were all published in 1994 or 1995, except for the reprint of Donald Robertson’s study originally published in 1959. These eight works represent a stimulating sample of recent approaches to questions of culture, power, and society in colonial Mexico. All reflect a marked interest in culture, but as a nonexclusive focus that is explored through broader historical analyses ranging from more conventionally crafted intellectual, social, and political histories to those showing a deeper interdisciplinary engagement with cultural anthropology and subaltern studies. These works illuminate in varying ways the complex nature of political and cultural formations within colonial society and point to the importance of local and global frames of analysis. In so doing, they make significant contributions to rethinking relationships of power in colonial Mexico and popular culture, and they also transcend binaries like resistance versus accommodation or strong state versus weak state. What emerges are explorations of the ways in which colonial (ideal) categories and ideologies were actively reworked at the local level as well as the ways in which the colonial state embodied the contradictions that partly enabled such reinterpretations. These works also explore the political and cultural influences that shaped the daily lives of “ordinary people.” In combination, these works examine an array of topics that include cultural ecology, political culture (elite and popular) as refracted through memories, symbols, visual culture, race, gender, the law, and changing relations between church and state.

Elinor Melville’s *A Plague of Sheep: Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico* provides an unusual window on relationships of power

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formative characteristics of hegemony have been stressed also by Raymond Williams in “Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory,” in *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*, edited by Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 407–23, 413. On colonial Mexico, see the essays in Beezley et al., *Rituals of Rule*.

7. See Taylor’s discussion of approaches to the colonial state in “Between Global Process,” pp. 140–66. Here he suggests that historians look at “bundles of relationships” and examine the interactions between state and local society through analyses of mediators and brokers, cultural hegemony (mentalities of subordination), the law, and elites. Views continue to differ as to the importance of the colonial state. Van Young, for example, has argued that we should take the state back out and that what mattered to most people was community, not state. See “The Raw and the Cooked: Elite and Popular Ideology in Mexico, 1800–1821,” in *The Middle Period in Latin America: Values and Attitudes in the 17th–19th Centuries*, edited by Mark D. Szuchman, 75–102, 94 (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1989). More recently Richard Boyer has suggested in his fine study of bigamy that social clusters (relatives, neighbors, work associates, and clienteles) “more than the formal institutions of church and state, did most to shape daily life in colonial Mexico.” See *Lives of the Bigamists*, 3.

and colonialism. This work builds on Leslie Simpson's idea, first expressed in his *Exploitation of Land* (1952), that the Spaniards triggered an ecological revolution. Melville explores how the introduction of pastoralism and sheep into New World ecosystems shaped ecological and social changes.<sup>8</sup> Spaniards did not simply build on preexisting environmental processes but changed the relationship between humans and their physical environment. The result was an environment as alien to indigenous peoples as it was to the Spaniards. Although most historians view the physical environment as passive and unchanging when compared with human action, Melville argues to the contrary that it operated as an active variable in the process of social change. The case of the Mezquital Valley demonstrates that changes in land use could lead to rapid and profound environmental change: pastoralism caused dessication, salination, deterioration of the soil, and erosion, all of which signified a loss of productive potential. In the new setting, the forms of exploitation in the new environment (pastoralism in this case) also changed. Pastoralism in sixteenth-century Mexico did not complement agriculture as it did in Spain but competed with it.

The most significant factor in the way these processes developed was the Spaniards' decision to ignore their own customs regulating grazing. By the time Spaniards began to take an interest in agriculture in the 1580s, sheep grazing not only dominated regional production, but large areas of the Valle del Mezquital were so degraded that the land could support little else, an outcome that prevented exploitation of the growing markets for agricultural products later in the century. Melville argues that neither Spaniards nor Indians could accurately assess the resources of the New World nor predict the outcome of adding new species. Nor could either group recognize the destructive consequences of their actions. Given this situation, Melville questions the idea that the Spaniards maximized the resources of the New World "as they found them" (p. 13, author's emphasis). She examines the implications of loss of productivity for transformation of developing colonial systems of production in the region and emergence of the hacienda. While Melville argues the case forcefully for the environment as an active local variable in the consolidation of Spanish conquest and colonialism, she avoids the trap of environmental determinism. Melville places her findings in a political and social context, as demonstrated in her discussion of the conquest process, and emphasizes the role of law and customs in the Spaniards' and Indians' access to water, pasture, and land. She also takes these factors into account in terms of the exercise of force.

Melville goes on to examine the broader ramifications of her study for recent debates on the growth and development of New World societies. She suggests that the evidence pointing to a correlation between a shift in

8. Leslie Byrd Simpson, *Exploitation of Land in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1952).

market orientation and environmental change has implications for this debate in providing further evidence that local variables (the physical environment) played a crucial role in the development of Mexico's political economy. At the same time, Melville stresses that the environment must be assessed as only one of several local variables, one that neither remains unchanged nor always implies degradation of resources. Nor are such effects experienced simultaneously by human populations.

Ida Altman and Reginald Butler have argued recently that "the study of ecological change is potentially one of the most revealing approaches to understanding the effect of contact between societies with diverse cultures."<sup>9</sup> Melville's *A Plague of Sheep* confirms this potential, although the study seems skewed toward the Spanish rather than the indigenous social and economic contexts. It should also be noted that this work is not as well grounded in its discussion of the area under study prior to the Spaniards' arrival.<sup>10</sup> Melville's first-rate account nevertheless broadens understanding of the process and consequences of conquest and demonstrates how the changing environment may have helped redefine local strategies and shape choices as much as laws and demographic shifts and settlement.

### *Memories, Symbols, and Images*

The three studies by Florescano, Poole, and Robertson contribute to a growing historical literature that addresses forms of symbolic and ideological production in colonial Mexico.<sup>11</sup> In *Memory, Myth, and Time: From the Aztecs to Independence*, Enrique Florescano explores the reconstruction of conceptions of time and historical events of the pre-Hispanic peoples and the Spanish (creoles) as well as the relationships among memory, history, and identity. In the case of the Mesoamerican peoples, he analyses a multiplicity of forms such as myth, legend, ritual, and religious symbols and outlines the founding myth of the origins and the cyclical conception of time that framed historical memory among them.

9. Ida B. Altman and Reginald D. Butler, "The Contact of Cultures: Perspectives on the Quincentenary," *American Historical Review* 99, no. 2 (Apr. 1994), 478–503, 498. Recent works that deal with Spanish "taming" of the environment, especially in supplying water to the newly constructed Spanish cities, include Sonya Lipsett-Rivera, "Water and Bureaucracy in Colonial Puebla de los Angeles," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 25, pt. 1 (1993):25–44.

10. The study has been criticized on the grounds that Melville did not use archaeological methods to establish whether there was much pressure on the land before the conquest or a tendency toward land degradation; whether the use of wood for fuel was as low as Melville believes; and whether the long-standing association between maize and maguey was not already a sign of a certain aridity. See the review by Juan Martínez Alier, *Journal of Latin American Studies* 27, pt. 1 (1995):221–22.

11. See Beezley et al., *Rituals of Rule*. Also see the interesting collection of essays entitled "Spectacle in Colonial Mexico" in *The Americas* 52, no. 3 (1996), special issue.

In reflecting on the elite and popular mentalities of Mexico, Florescano traces the ways in which Hebrew ideas of historical development and theological time as well as Christian eschatological and apocalyptic ideas were all incorporated into these mentalities and how they dominated interpretations of time as well as the past. Florescano traces the “new historical discourse” made possible by the Spanish Conquest of Mexico by reflecting on the imperialist providential interpretations of Spanish chroniclers, conquistadors’ narratives, Christian conceptions of history penned by evangelizing friars and members of religious orders, and the emergence of creole patriotism and “a national history.”<sup>12</sup> Only with the Enlightenment and Mexican independence did secular thought appear, allowing the development of a modern political conception that explained historical events independently of supernatural or sacred intervention.

Florescano draws two major conclusions. First, he argues that unlike the single discourse of the past produced by the rulers of pre-Colombian Mexico, historical memory in the Mexican viceroyalty was fragmented, resulting in conflicting interpretations of the past of indigenous mythic and European religious origins. Not until the eighteenth century did a representation of the past emerge that tried to combine these multiple memories into a single version and represent it as the collective memory of those born in Mexico. This manifestation was creole nationalism. Second, Florescano suggests that despite the subordination of indigenous peoples, they continued to evoke their past through myth and oral tradition. This conservation and revitalization of ancestral memory provides, in his view, “the most enabling resource in the struggle to continue being Indians in a situation of dominance” (p. 231). In developing this point, Florescano describes various indigenous rebellions, including the Mixtón Insurrection of 1541–1542, the Maya Insurrection of 1546–1547, and various religious movements (such as those focusing on the Virgin of Guadalupe, the Virgin of Zinacantán, and the Virgin of Cancuc).<sup>13</sup> Although one may quibble with Florescano’s presentation of the unified nature of “Mesoamerican discourse,” *Memory, Myth, and Time in Mexico* is an intriguing exploration of the ways in which indigenous and creole populations sought to use and to make sense of their pasts and their presents and to imagine their futures in the context of colonialism.<sup>14</sup>

12. See D. A. Brading’s magisterial treatment of these themes in *The First America: The Spanish Monarchy, Creole Patriots, and the Liberal State, 1492–1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

13. Gruzinski’s discussion of related issues regarding the transformation of indigenous memory in *The Conquest of Mexico* provides an illuminating comparison. Also see his highly suggestive “Images and Cultural *Mestizaje* in Colonial Mexico,” *Poetics Today* 16, no. 1 (1995):53–75.

14. For a broader treatment of colonization of languages, memories, and space in central Mexico (and to a lesser extent in colonial Yucatán and Peru), see Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (Ann Arbor: University

Complementing Florescano's discussion is Stafford Poole's *Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origins and Sources of a Mexican National Symbol*, a rigorous study of one of the most culturally charged and enduring symbols to emerge in colonial Mexico. Unlike Florescano's broad-ranging interpretive synthesis, Poole opts for a historiographical analysis of the origins and sources of the Virgin of Guadalupe rather than an examination of the importance of *guadalupanismo* for the Mexican populace. He analyzes known sources of the apparition tradition up to 1797, the close of the "formative period of the tradition and the arguments against it" (p. 14). Poole's conclusions echo arguments made by Francisco de la Maza and Jacques Lafaye that place the turning point in Guadalupan devotion not in the 1550s (as argued by Edmundo O'Gorman) but with the publication of Miguel Sánchez's *Imagen de la Virgen María, Madre de Dios de Guadalupe, milagrosamente aparecida en la ciudad de México, celebrada en su historia, con la profecía del capítulo doce del Apocalipsis* (1648). The yellow fever epidemic of 1736 to 1737 witnessed the culmination of the Guadalupe of the apparitions as the most important devotion of New Spain. As will be familiar to many readers, the Virgin of Guadalupe became a sign of special election of the criollos of Mexico. The uniqueness of the apparitions was summed up in a quote attributed to Pope Benedict XIV from Psalm 147, "*Non fecit taliter omni nationi*" ("He has not done the like for any other nation").

Poole, however, finds no clear evidence between 1531 and 1648 supporting the story of Juan Diego or any apparitions at Tepeyac or a strong indigenous devotion, "at least not after 1556" (p. 99). He argues that the association of the Virgin of Guadalupe with Tonantzin is questionable. It is interesting to compare this interpretation with the conventional one in Florescano's study, which asserts that a new cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe developed by the middle of the sixteenth century in Mexico City and that the ancient cult devoted to the pre-Hispanic Tonantzin had become confused with a new cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe (p. 135). Moreover, Poole finds no evidence to support claims that the *Nican mopohua*, the Nahuatl text describing the apparitions, was contemporaneous with the apparitions or was written by Antonio Valeriano. Finally, Poole concedes that although the symbolism of Guadalupe does not rest on any objective historical basis, it remains the most powerful religious and national symbol in Mexico.

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of Michigan Press, 1995), especially pt. 2, "The Colonization of Memory." A useful complement to this study for the post-independence period is Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, *México profundo: Reclaiming a Civilization* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996). For thinking about the past-present relationship intrinsic to the concept of memory, see Frye, *Indians into Mexicans*. For useful methodological considerations, see Richard Johnson and Graham Dawson, "Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method" in *Making Histories: Studies in History Writing and Politics*, edited by Richard Johnson, Gregor McLennan, Bill Schwarz, and Daniel Sutton (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 205–52, esp. 211–15; and Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* (London: Verso, 1994).

Poole's carefully crafted discussion in *Our Lady of Guadalupe* provides considerable insight into the broader cultural and political contexts and contingencies in which the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe was constructed. These circumstances are well illustrated by Poole's reminder that the Virgin of Guadalupe was neither the first nor even the second choice as intercessor in 1736.<sup>15</sup>

Also intriguing is his discussion of the Bourbon bureaucrats' responses to Guadalupe, which highlights briefly the relationship between the cult and politics. High-ranking *peninsulares* like archbishops and viceroys favored the devotion. Although Poole argues that the archbishops sought to retain the support of a predominantly criollo secular clergy, the reasons for viceregal support are not entirely clear. He suggests that it may have provided an opportunity to ally with the criollos or to minimize the political impact of the apparition tradition. Yet it is partly because of Poole's historiographical approach that *Our Lady of Guadalupe* does not entirely fill "the void" in the way he would like it to do. The reason is that his approach precludes asking questions that would require deeper exploration of popular religious devotion. Such an approach in turn results in a conservative definition of sources. His caution regarding the links between Tonantzin and the Virgin of Guadalupe is well taken but may be premature until additional research is carried out in different types of documents.<sup>16</sup>

The studies by Florescano and Poole both point to the need for more research on the emergence of local cults and devotions in colonial Mexico, notwithstanding problems with sources. Which manifestations of the Virgin Mary or saints were being venerated if not the Virgin of Guadalupe? And where, by whom, and with what results? How did public patronage shape the emergence of those cults, and how did they help shape a community's sense of itself?<sup>17</sup>

15. William Taylor also reminds historians that the Virgin of Guadalupe was not Miguel Hidalgo's first choice either because he planned his uprising to coincide with the fair of the Virgin of San Juan de los Lagos, not with the feast of Guadalupe. According to Taylor, "Guadalupe's importance as a national symbol for Indians and common people may have been more a result of the war . . . than a motivating force in it." See Taylor, "Between Global Process," 161. See also his discussion in "The Virgin of Guadalupe in New Spain: An Inquiry into the Social History of Marian Devotion," *American Ethnologist* 14, no. 1 (1987):9–33.

16. As Taylor has suggested in his discussion of the Virgin of Guadalupe and the cult of the Virgin Mary of the Immaculate Conception, "the published works of priests sometimes treat Mary directly, but they cannot be assumed to represent popular beliefs and rarely contain evidence that bears on the political significance of religious beliefs that are much more likely to be found in criminal trial records, civil suits." See Taylor, "Between Global Process," 156. An excellent visual study of Guadalupe that complements Poole's work is the unfortunately out-of-print *Imágenes guadalupanas: Cuatro siglos* (Mexico City: Fundación Cultural Televisa, 1987).

17. See Taylor, "The Virgin of Guadalupe"; and Linda A. Curcio-Nagy, "Native Icon to City Protectress to Royal Patroness: Ritual Political Symbolism and the Virgin of Remedies," *The Americas* 52, no. 3 (1996):367–91.

A crucial element in symbolic production is the artifact itself, whether it be a sacred space, an image, a shrine, a painting, or a statue. The reprinting of Donald Robertson's *Mexican Manuscript Painting of the Early Colonial Period: The Metropolitan Schools* focuses on the aesthetic production of pre- and post-conquest Mexican artists (the *tlacuihole*) and its transformation after conquest. Robertson identifies and compares various pictorial traditions of Central Mexico (including the schools of Mexico-Tenochtitlán, Texcoco, and Tlatelolco). He also differentiates pre-conquest manuscripts from post-conquest ones according to form and style and discusses the gradual decline of native style during the sixteenth century and its assimilation into the European tradition.

Elizabeth Hill Boone's foreword to the new edition elaborates on Robertson's achievement and comments on some of his errors. She points out that he approached the early colonial pictorials not as ethnohistoric sources for information on indigenous life but as works of art, hence the emphasis on the "schools" of painting that produced them. In the thirty years since the original publication of Robertson's study, the trend has shifted: scholars are now likely to focus more on the social and aesthetic context of painted documents and how they would have functioned in colonial society and less on the distinctions between pre- and post-conquest elements in a manuscript.<sup>18</sup> Robertson's influence nevertheless continues to be significant, as Boone acknowledges: "Thirty-five years later it still cannot be ignored by anyone interested in the pictorial codices of Mexico" (p. xv). Nor can anyone interested in issues of indigenous identities and responses to Spanish colonialism overlook Robertson's influence.<sup>19</sup> At the least, Robertson continues to force scholars to consider visual culture, the terms of its production and transformation, and its use as historical evidence to be interrogated critically rather than merely passive illustration.

A recent example of a study sensitive to issues raised by both Robertson and the most recent ethnohistorical studies on indigenous responses to Spanish colonialism is Jeanette Favrot-Peterson's study of the murals of Malinalco.<sup>20</sup> She traces how the wall paintings promoted the po-

18. See for example *Writing without Words: Alternative Literacies in Mesoamerica and the Andes*, edited by Elizabeth Hill Boone and Walter D. Mignolo (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994).

19. For further elaboration on the survival and function of Mexican paintings, see Gruzinski's perceptive discussion in *The Conquest of Mexico*; see also his *Painting the Conquest: The Mexican Indians and the European Renaissance* (Paris: Flammarion, 1992). James Lockhart also illustrated Robertson's influence in his superb study of the colonial Nahua. See Lockhart's discussion of artistic phenomena in *The Nahuas after Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992), 426.

20. Jeanette Favrot-Peterson, *The Paradise Garden Murals of Malinalco: Utopia and Empire in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993). Also suggestive for ap-

litical and religious agendas of the Spanish conquerors while preserving a record of pre-conquest rituals and imagery. But in contrast to Robertson, Favrot-Peterson argues that the whitewashing of the walls at the end of the sixteenth century suggests that the spiritual conquest “failed.” She explores mural painting as an artistic response to acculturation: “although the murals’ strong overall European character is unquestionable, a clearer picture has emerged of the artists, not as slavish copyists but as independent participants and creative collaborators. . . . Malinalco confirms the surviving practice of using pre-Hispanic natural metaphors for categories of social hierarchy, supernatural beings, and afterlife destinies.”<sup>21</sup>

Much remains that is suggestive for future researchers in Robertson’s *Mexican Manuscript Painting of the Early Colonial Period*. His brief discussion of the generations of artists in the period immediately following the conquest raises a number of questions related to the fate of the indigenous artisans and artists as cultural mediators in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Patronage relationships (public and private), the development of the artists’ guilds, and regulation of aesthetic conventions all present provocative sites for examining the politics of aesthetic and artisanal practices in colonial Mexico and the racial, gender, and class antagonisms they may illuminate.<sup>22</sup>

### *Reassessing Colonial Society: Race, Gender, and the Law*

Three studies by Robert Douglas Cope, Steve Stern, and Charles Cutter examine relationships between local communities and local elites or regional representatives (brokers) of the colonial state and consider how these relationships inform popular conceptions of legitimate authority and illegitimate power. Their differing ideas about the nature of hegemony can be summed up roughly (albeit reductively) as hegemony as consensus-coercion (Cope), hegemony as partial consensus and contingent (Stern), and hegemony as consensual (Cutter).

In two ambitious and challenging studies, Cope and Stern deftly analyze via constructions of race and gender the ways in which subordinate peoples rearticulate and rearrange the social categories that marginalize their existence.<sup>23</sup> Cope’s *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebeian Soci-*

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proaches to visual culture and consideration of the problems and possibilities of interpretation of visual representation is *Reframing the Renaissance: Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America, 1450–1650*, edited by Claire Farago (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995).

21. Favrot-Peterson, *Paradise Garden Murals*, 178.

22. As Charles Gibson’s discussion of indigenous artisans pointed out, “Indian craftsmanship from the start received the full approval of the Spanish state.” See *The Aztecs under Spanish Rule* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1964), 399.

23. See Tsing’s stimulating discussion of “margins” as the sites from which “we see the instability of social categories,” in “From the Margins,” 279.

*ety in Colonial Mexico City, 1660–1720* challenges one of the traditional explanations for colonial control in the absence of a standing army: the imposition of the ideology of a racial hierarchy, the *sistema de castas*. Cope reassesses and interrogates the logic and efficacy of this system of colonial domination and explores how the subject casta population interpreted the socio-racial hierarchy variously according to local needs and aspirations. Cope finds not that race had no meaning for the lower classes but that its significance differed from the meaning held by the elites. He argues that “race” was an ambiguous category with crosscutting meanings, that the plebeians “rejected or modified the sistema de castas and even appropriated its racial categories for their own use” (p. 163). For many castas, “passing” (moving from one racial category to another) generally did not result in significant social mobility because the social networks of each racial group largely determined the options available to them. Cope argues, “What good would it do a black weaver to become a ‘mulatto’?” (p. 121). Yet he also points out that elite castas who prospered and achieved some economic and social standing faced a different situation and discovered that the main obstacle to continued progress was, in fact, race.

If racial ideology does not account for social control, then what does? According to *The Limits of Racial Domination*, the answer is patron-client relationships between employer and employee, between government officials and institutions (although to a lesser degree), and in familial networks. In Cope’s view, “The secret of the colony’s stability over some three centuries lay not in government regulations but in the dense thicket of social relationships, both within the lower classes and between plebeians and elites, that perpetuated the dominance of the Spanish aristocracy” (p. 48). Such patronage networks divided the urban poor and limited their ability to challenge an inequitable and exploitative order because of their precarious economic situation. But patron-client relationships were also shaped by expectations on the plebeians’ part that “justice” would be dispensed by the elite and the governing institutions of society. When such expectations were frustrated, Mexico City elites could be challenged, if only temporarily. This possibility was demonstrated in the riot of 1692, one of the most significant of the few urban riots to occur in colonial Mexico.

This study is an important contribution to understanding urban colonial society as well as race as a cultural construct and its multiple meanings.<sup>24</sup> But while Cope’s nuanced observations on the relevance and social logic of racial identity are persuasive, his characterization of the Mexican plebeian population is less so. He presents evidence of a divided plebeian population. But he also portrays this population as exhibiting a

24. On the *casta* population of colonial Mexico and its African dimension, see the doctoral dissertation of Herman L. Bennett, “Lovers, Family, and Friends: The Formation of Afro-Mexico, 1580–1810,” Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1993.

strong sense of solidarity (referring to common bonds among servants and a reluctance to inform on one another), turning to Spanish authorities only in cases of conflict with social superiors. Yet the reader finds no sustained exploration of the power dynamics within the plebeian population (this argument is obscured by interchanging terms like *the poor*, *plebeians*, and *servants*), and thus their solidarity remains more an assertion than a demonstration. The fragility of such “solidarity” is illustrated well by the alacrity of the poor in informing on one another in the aftermath of the 1692 riot. But the issue goes even deeper. If Cope’s argument is correct, then why did plebeians of the late eighteenth century turn to colonial authorities to resolve problems among themselves?<sup>25</sup> Was it simply the fact that a reformed municipal justice system gave them greater access to its services? At the least, such behavior may suggest a shift in urban plebeian political strategies.

Cope’s assessment of the plebeians’ “solidarity” might also have been refined by integrating issues of gender more substantively into his discussion of relationships of power and conflict. *The Limits of Racial Domination in Plebeian Society* draws attention to the colonial state’s inability to impose its categories of racial hierarchy unequivocally on the colonial Mexican population. Steve Stern’s *The Secret History of Gender: Women, Men, and Power in Late Colonial Mexico* examines another contradiction, that “between gender ideology and the social reality of populations.”<sup>26</sup> Operating on the premise that culture is a language of argument rather than a unified and unifying body of values, Stern explores how patriarchal gender ideals and values may have been experienced daily by poor Mexicans in the eighteenth century. He focuses on late colonial Morelos (1760–1821) but also includes comparative regional studies on Oaxaca and Mexico City (based primarily on seven hundred colonial criminal cases). Although Stern describes his study as a portrait of an era rather than a study of change over time, the final chapter reflects on changes occurring in Mexico from the late colonial period to the twentieth century. A section in the conclusion addressed to “Eurocentric theorists” considers ways that findings derived from a Mexican context may have a paradigmatic value for the historical study of gender and politics in other societies, including Western societies.

Stern examines local community life and the daily interactions between women and men from multiple perspectives as well as their social

25. Michael Scardaville, “(Hapsburg) Law and (Bourbon) Order: State Authority, Popular Unrest, and the Criminal Justice System in Bourbon Mexico City,” *The Americas* 50, no. 4 (1994):501–25, 520.

26. Elizabeth Kuznesof, “The Construction of Gender in Colonial Latin America,” *Colonial Latin American Review* 1, nos. 1–2 (1992):253–70, 268. See also Irene Silverblatt’s recent discussion, “Lessons of Gender and Ethnohistory,” *Ethnohistory* 42, no. 4, (1995):639–49.

alliances and connections within and across various levels (familial, extended kin, extrafamilial, and supralocal). This approach allows him to identify and explore the roots of conflict over gender rights and claims (verbal deference, economic obligation, sexuality, and physical mobility) and then to tackle difficult issues of male peasant violence, masculinity, and power. Stern carefully analyses the strategies and social weapons used by women in their struggles with men, including what he terms "the pluralization of patriarchs," cultivation of female networks of allies and protectors, threat of supernatural retribution, appeal to higher authorities, and threat of scandal. He argues that the conflicts over gender rights and obligations produced "contested patriarchal pacts" that reveal tensions between "a contingent or conditional model of gender right and power and a more absolute or innate framework. . . . Women generally contested not patriarchal first principles as such but their operational meaning in the practical workings of everyday life" (p. 229). Stern suggests that a major impact of these struggles was the creation of gender conventions that produced a broader tolerance of the conditional dynamics of patriarchal authority and a wider range of more or less acceptable female behaviors on a practical basis. He develops this finding to argue that subaltern women and men developed their own ideas about gender relations and legitimate gender authority. In doing so, Stern challenges the idea of a single code of honor and shame that reflected gender values and social relations in colonial Mexican society. He suggests that this idea be replaced by one that incorporates plural, alternative, and competing gender codes.

Stern also explores in *The Secret History of Gender* the connections between political culture and gender culture and the ways in which gendered social relations of power between the sexes may have created a basis for understandings of authority and power in general. He argues that the metaphor of the family served as a powerful language of cohesion and legitimacy in popular culture: language of good and bad political authority echoed the language and experience of good fathers and irresponsible parasites.<sup>27</sup> A second implication of this argument for Stern is that peasant political culture was marked by a deep contradiction between a political vision that incorporated both hierarchical impulses (privilege, subordination, and obedience to authority) and egalitarian impulses (service, reciprocity, and a conditional basis of authority). He uses these connections and contradictions to explore this broader question: if subalterns acknowledged the elites' failure to live up to paternal pretense, why did they remain partially receptive to the premises of a paternalistic political culture?

Finally, Stern argues that comparative regional analysis allows him

27. On the same topic, see Frye's discussion of the indigenous petitioners' use of the metaphor of fathers and sons in local politics in *Indians into Mexicans*, 77–87.

to apply his main findings on gender and power at a supraregional level, while identifying and accommodating regional idiosyncrasies across Mexican regions (Morelos, Oaxaca, and Mexico City). For example, using Morelos as a baseline, Stern found in Oaxaca greater foundations for female rights in male-female relations, underwritten by the particularities of indigenous culture and what he terms “the ethnic dynamics” of colonial Oaxaca. In plebeian Mexico City, patriarchal pacts were not only contested but subject to a crisis, one shaped by city life and its conventions, headstrong female personalities, and use of the urban judiciary by “desperate wives.” But throughout all three regions, the interplay between contingent and absolute visions of gender rights and a familiar range of specific issues being contended is identifiable.

Theoretically sophisticated and empirically rich, *The Secret History of Gender* is in many ways a compelling study of gender and popular political culture in colonial Mexico. Regrettably, this work is not an easy book to read. The text is repetitious and indulges in numerous digressions, problems compounded by the author’s dense and sometimes obscure prose. Despite Stern’s evident empathy for his subjects, these problems in expression muffle the very voices that he goes to great pains to reconstruct. Readers will no doubt find room to debate Stern’s interpretations and presentation of evidence, which include a fair amount of upstreaming and speculation. For example, his discussion of Mexico City and its “patriarchal crisis” is suggestive but outstrips the evidence presented. Nevertheless, *The Secret History of Gender* is definitely an exercise in discovering what James Scott has termed “the infra-politics of colonial peasant communities” and an exploration of the dilemmas faced and strategies forged by subordinate women and men. In the process, Stern’s study illuminates the complex relationship between colonialism and patriarchalism.

Charles Cutter considers the role of the law and its implementation in colonial society in *The Legal Culture of Northern New Spain, 1700–1810*. He analyses “the legal milieu” in New Mexico and Texas through its brokers—the governors and lesser officials (*alcaldes ordinarios* in Texas and *alcaldes mayores* in New Mexico). Cutter also evaluates procedural elements of the law as expressed in criminal and civil cases (*sumarias*, *juicios plenarios*, and *sentencias*) as well as the clients, the local populace. He argues that a distinct legal culture permeated the colonial world, the touchstone by which Spanish subjects understood and negotiated their relationship to the rest of society. While *doctrina* and law constituted important bases for the legal tradition in northern New Spain, custom and *equidad* (a communally defined sense of fairness) represented the most critical elements of *derecho indiano* and formed the basis of *derecho vulgar*. Local officials possessed no formal legal training, and what they managed to acquire probably occurred on the job. Magistrates made judicial decisions based on a combination of their knowledge, common sense, and the broader interests

of their provinces. Maintenance of public order rather than simple adjudication became a prime function of the local magistrates.<sup>28</sup> Various types of cases are described throughout the study, ranging from the participation of Pueblo Indian groups and their canny use of the legal system, intervention in cases of marriage between unequal partners, mistreatment of servants by masters, and the return of children to parents.<sup>29</sup> Individuals expected justice—their own proper *derecho*—while magistrates endeavored “to give to each his own” (p. 34). And apparently, they got it. According to Cutter, the lower classes appealed to the king’s judiciary, and “their expectations were met often enough for them to participate on a constant basis. . . . Those of lower status . . . consented to and thereby legitimized the hegemony of Spanish colonial rule because it assured them some degree of protection and because it was partly of their making” (p. 148).

The discussion in *The Legal Culture of Northern New Spain* is by turns stimulating and disappointing, a recurring problem being that the author’s engagement with the relevant historiography seems at times superficial.<sup>30</sup> His general argument that local government resulted as much from improvisation geared to local needs (elite and popular) as from the unquestioning imposition of colonial policies and edicts is a familiar one. But the implication of Cutter’s study—the dilution of Bourbon efforts to enforce a standardized, uniform version of the law—presents an interesting twist. Readers find no systematic assessment of the court cases, which are scattered throughout the book. This dispersion makes Cutter’s argument of “constant participation” by the lower classes difficult to assess. Who exactly is he talking about? The cases presented suggest a cross-section, but the absence of any quantitative and qualitative analysis according to gender, race, and incident of the six hundred court cases consulted is somewhat baffling. Cutter focuses on how the legal culture shaped a “consensual hegemony,” but the scattered evidence of tensions and conflict in local society throughout his analysis is mostly ignored. Stern, for example, discusses poor women’s use of the legal system, but he also emphasizes that such decisions risked exposure to “fees, extortions, and interference by predatory authorities” and thus were not taken lightly (p. 101).

28. Cheryl English Martin draws similar conclusions regarding governance in general in eighteenth-century Chihuahua by officials who lacked formal legal training and favored equitable treatment and prudent conciliation. See Martin, *Governance and Society in Colonial Mexico*, 82.

29. For further discussion of colonial society in New Mexico, see Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came*.

30. Cutter cites, for example, Scardaville’s “(Hapsburg) Law and (Bourbon) Order,” and Woodrow Borah, *Justice by Insurance: The General Indian Court of Colonial Mexico and the Legal Aides of the Half-Real* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983). But Cutter does not take advantage of the comparative issues that these works raise for the roles of law in colonial society.

This sense of the costs and consequences of such choices is missing from Cutter's account. Similarly, his reassessment of the *alcaldes mayores* is welcome but ultimately unconvincing because of the little sense of the multiple relationships and contexts within which these officials were operating.<sup>31</sup> Despite these misgivings, *The Legal Culture of Northern New Spain* reminds readers that colonial norms were subject to reworkings at different levels of the social hierarchy, not only among the popular classes. The study joins a growing body of literature reassessing the role of law in colonial society and suggesting that "law does not have to be the 'ordered irrelevancy' it has become in Latin American Social History," to cite William Taylor.<sup>32</sup>

### *Church, State, and Society*

The cultural ramifications of Bourbon policies and their political significance have yet to be explored fully. One of the most perversely spectacular examples was the Bourbon attempt to reform the Catholic Church, an attempt that unwittingly contributed to the demise of the Spanish Empire. David Brading's *Church and State in Bourbon Mexico: The Diocese of Michoacán, 1749–1810* examines the impact of secularization in the Diocese of Michoacán and the Bourbon attack on the jurisdiction, privileges, and property of the church. Although this study concludes Brading's trilogy on Bourbon Mexico, the author suggests in a modest statement that it also possesses "a more introductory character" (p. xii).<sup>33</sup> Brading readily admits that his study follows in part the path set by Nancy Farriss in *Crown and Clergy in Colonial Mexico* (1968). Readers will be familiar with some of the issues and arguments regarding the clergy's role in the 1810 insurgency. But Brading's study of the Diocese of Michoacán contains much that is new and provocative, a hallmark of his previous work. This elegant and perceptive study focuses on three main themes: the religious orders in Michoacán, the priests and the laity there, and the bishops and the Cathedral Chapter of the Diocese of Michoacán.

Framing Brading's argument is the growing tension between Catholicism after the Council of Trent, with its broad appeal cutting across ethnic and class lines, and an enlightened religion that appealed mainly to

31. See Gutiérrez's brief but contrasting discussion of *alcaldes* in New Mexico in *When Jesus Came*, 302–3.

32. Taylor, "Between Global Process," 162–63. In addition to the works by Borah and Scardaville just cited, see *Five Centuries of Law and Politics in Central Mexico*, edited by Ronald Spores and Ross Hassig (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University, 1984); and the recent carefully crafted study by Susan Kellogg, *Law and the Transformation of Aztec Culture, 1500–1700* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995).

33. The other two studies in the trilogy are Brading's highly influential *Miners and Merchants in Bourbon Mexico* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971) and *Haciendas and Ranchos in the Mexican Bajío* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

the elites and sought (unsuccessfully for the most part) to curb the excesses of popular religion and devotions.<sup>34</sup> Particularly interesting are this study's insights into the uneven impact of modernization of the Catholic Church and secularization on Bourbon reformers and the clerical and lay population as well. Parish priests in Mexico found themselves in the peculiar position of replacing regular clergy only to then be increasingly marginalized as the Bourbon monarchy sought to restrict the role of priests in local affairs. The authority of ecclesiastical judges to imprison or inflict punishment on offenders was challenged by the Bourbons, and local conflicts between the parochial clergy and magistrates were exacerbated by the abrogation of ecclesiastical immunity.

Brading suggests in *Church and State in Bourbon Mexico* that the male religious orders suffered a crisis of vocation at the beginning of the nineteenth century (the exceptions being the missionary friars of the *colegium de propaganda fide*). He argues that the female orders experienced a similar crisis and that the controversy over the *vida común* (which for the most part failed in Michoacán) may have reduced the number of nuns in its convents. The *vida común* was Archbishop Lorenzana's solution to the prevailing living conditions, in which "for every professed nun there were at least two other women living in convents, consisting of servants, young girls and even ageing widows, many of whom came and went according to their whim, so that conventual seclusion was regularly interrupted. The cause of this disorder was the arrangement whereby each nun had her own kitchen, depending on a servant to cook for her and to purchase or bring in food supplied by relatives. It was to remedy this state of affairs that Lorenzana demanded the introduction of 'the common life,' according to which nuns would henceforth eat together in the refectory" (p. 82). Why some nuns chose to embrace the controversial common life and others did not requires further exploration. Although Brading presents a convincing economic argument to account for the failure to implement the common life, one wonders how the nuns' patronage relationships, their social and cultural roles that transcended the convent walls, and their own piety and religious sensibilities framed their choices and decisions.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, Brading

34. William Taylor's forthcoming study will no doubt provide illuminating insights into the multifaceted relationships between parish priests and their rural parishioners in colonial Mexico. See *Magistrates of the Sacred: Priests and Parishioners in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, forthcoming). See also Luisa Zahino Peñafort, *Iglesia y sociedad en México, 1765–1800: Tradición, reforma y reacciones* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1996); and María del Pilar Martínez López-Cano, *Iglesia, estado y economía, siglos XVI al XIX* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1995).

35. See Brian Larkin's suggestive discussion in "The Common Life Controversy in Puebla de Los Angeles, 1765–1781: Gender, Hegemony, and Religious Representation," M.A. thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1994. Here he examines convents as "nodal points of political, social, and cultural currents." Larkin argues persuasively that a number of influences

suggests that the trends in female and male orders differed, the female orders characterized by exuberant initiatives that led to the foundation and expansion of the *beaterías* and the establishment of several new foundations for female religious in Michoacán, Guadalajara, and Oaxaca.

Brading's careful discussion illustrates the complex nature of the colonial Catholic Church and also how competing visions of power and authority manifested in state reforms can open up (in unintended and unpredictable ways) new spaces for popular and elite initiatives. For example, the challenge to church jurisdiction enabled indigenous communities to take advantage of growing antagonisms between local magistrates and priests in order to advance their own agendas. At the same time, the challenge expanded the possibilities for wealthy creole women to establish new foundations for the daughters of indigenous caciques, efforts buttressed by the Bourbon emphasis on utilitarian institutions.<sup>36</sup>

### Conclusion

In combination these studies provide penetrating insights into the daily lives of ordinary people, a sense of their engagement with forms of colonial power on their own terms, and the broader cultural and political context within which such engagements were shaped (including the newest kid on the historical block, the environment). What emerges are portraits of relationships that stress the instability and fluidity of colonial categories, contingencies, ambiguities, and idiosyncrasies. Such portraits capture the multilayered, densely textured nature of the lives of colonial subjects. At the same time, they demonstrate the contradictory character of state forms, which both restrain and empower (the emphasis being on constant reworkings and modifications rather than on "resistance" *per se*). As a result, these works reify neither popular culture nor "the state" but draw our attention to the importance of the local (local knowledge of gender, class, community, race, and religion) as well as the global (policies, institutions, and formal mechanisms of power), which acknowledges

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shaped nuns' decisions to accept or reject the common life in Puebla, including their religious piety, sensibilities, and understanding of the monastic life and "how patronage relationships between the Mexican and Pueblan elites and the convents on the one hand and the urban poor on the other enabled some nuns to withstand encroachments of episcopal authority over their lives." See Larkin, "The Common Life Controversy," 3, 13.

36. The introduction of the Carmelites in Oaxaca was financed by the Marquesa de Selva Nevada, María Antonia Gómez Rodríguez Pedroso; that of the convent and college of the Company of Mary in Mexico City, known as La Enseñanza, was financed by María Ignacia Azlor, sister of the Marquesa de San Miguel de Aguayo. See also Asunción Lavrin's discussion in "In Search of the Colonial Woman in Mexico: The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *Latin American Women: Historical Perspectives*, edited by Lavrin (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1978).

"parameters of change that lie outside the subaltern world but continually inform it."<sup>37</sup>

These works also prompt several observations. First, Brading's *Church and State in Bourbon Mexico* illustrates vividly the need for further research on the Catholic Church in colonial Mexico to examine how the Bourbon assault played out in various dioceses at different levels of society. Moreover, the combination of the studies by Brading, Florescano, and Poole draw attention to the theme of popular religion and local devotions and how "the sacred was involved in the development of the state and relationships of power."<sup>38</sup> The point is not to assume religion's central relevance. Popular religion does not seem to have exerted significant influence in the lives of the subjects explored by Stern or Cope. Recent studies of religion suggest that religion operated in individuals' lives in complex and diverse ways. This finding makes it all the more important to explore how religion could shape believers' strategies, expectations, and perceptions of power.<sup>39</sup>

Second, these studies illustrate the transformative impact of the histories of the voiceless and the marginal on our understanding of colonial Mexican society. But they do so in ways that point future scholars in a direction that will prevent such histories from becoming repetitive, static, or (even worse) predictable. Such studies will confront the genuine differences in how power was exercised, by whom, over whom, and with what consequences. Such a direction poses a challenge for future historians of colonial Mexico similar to that recently articulated by Florencia Mallon for Mexican history in the nineteenth century: how "to reintegrate social history into politics." One might add cultural history as well. Cope's *The Limits of Racial Domination*, for example, draws attention to the lack of research on urban society and politics in colonial Mexico (not to mention Hapsburg Mexico). It also highlights the need for further research on colonial cities if we are to move beyond what may be termed "the passive-city

37. See C. A. Bayly, "Rallying around the Subaltern," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 16, no. 1 (1988):110–20, 115.

38. Taylor, "Between Global Process," 165–66.

39. Revisionist approaches to religion emphasize religious innovation rather than decline and focus on proactive transformation rather than what has been termed the "crisis-solace model." For a stimulating discussion, see the essays by Daniel Levine, "Constructing Culture and Power" and "Popular Groups, Popular Culture, and Popular Religion," in *Constructing Culture and Power in Latin America*, edited by Levine (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993). For examples related to colonial Mexico, see Van Young's interesting discussion in "The Cuautla Lazarus." Here he comments that the testimony he examined begins to indicate "how very basic religious thinking and imagery were to ordinary people's view of the world, of politics, and of political protest and violence," 9. Boyer's *Lives of the Bigamists* sheds light on the interplay between folk beliefs and popular understandings of church doctrine. See also the essays by Linda Curcio-Nagy and Clara García-Ayluardo in Beezley et al., *Rituals of Rule*.

syndrome" (how to account for the lack of popular rebellion in Mexican cities in comparison with a rebellious countryside) and its implications for understanding the nature of elite and popular politics in colonial Mexican cities prior to independence from Spain.<sup>40</sup> Third, the somewhat flat, one-dimensional portrayals of elites and brokers in the studies by Cope, Stern, and Cutter also point to the need to refine and expand our understanding of the roles of brokers and of elites in general. Only then will we develop a more nuanced understanding of how "high" and "popular" politics interact and influence one another in varied and unpredictable ways and how they serve to shape the limits of colonial domination and popular challenges, the possibilities for consensus and inclusion, and the imperatives of exclusion and marginalization.<sup>41</sup>

40. See Scardaville's discussion in "(Hapsburg) Law and (Bourbon) Order"; and Eric Van Young, "Islands in the Storm: Quiet Cities and Violent Countrysides in the Mexican Independence Era," *Past and Present*, no. 118 (1988):130–55.

41. Florencia Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 323.

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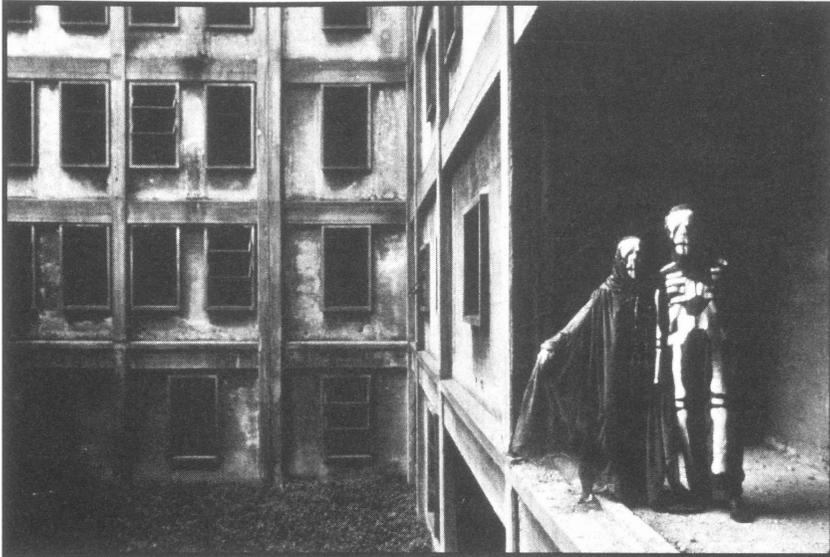
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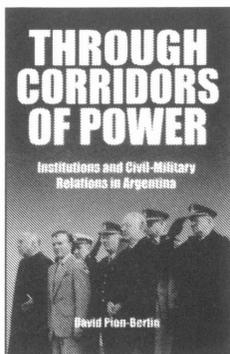
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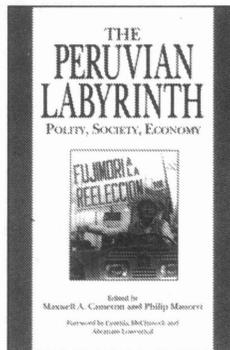
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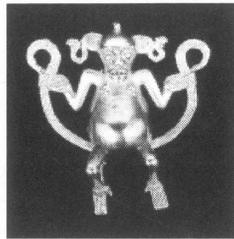
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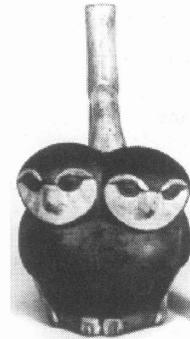
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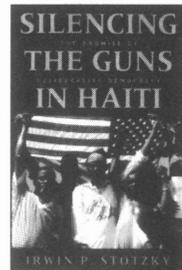
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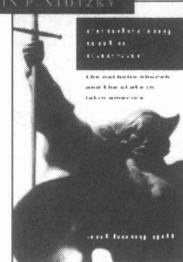
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