REVIEWS OF BOOKS

nature of the business and highlighting the features that it shares with, but is advanced in form of, sports such as horse-racing, baseball or professional football. In so doing, these are the construction of purpose-built spaces (the first in Europe since Roman times), though Roman arenas were not playing public), the early emergence of a specialist press and bullfighters as celebrities (astronomical earnings, pride, endorsement, charity performances, press interest in their lives). He goes on to examine and interpret other aspects relating to the business such as changes in the social and geographical origins of bullfighters, the shifting relative importance of the bull breeders and the types of bulls used, the role of women and their banning from the profession in 1906 and the social and gender composition of audiences. Shubert shows how the simultaneous popularity of bullfighting and opposition to bullfighting presented politicians with difficulties and these too are examined and interpreted (with special attention to the 'crowd'). The final chapter is less concerned with the commercial reality of the bullfight, and provides an interesting history of the use of bullfighters to mark royal occasions and political events. Throughout Shubert draws on sources ranging from local and central government documentation in press reports to travel journals by foreign visitors to Madrid, as well as secondary literature on the bullfight. For the most part this study is eminently readable and, stepping outside the debate on the morality/the 'Spanishness' of the myth-making nature of bullfighting, provides new and interesting perspectives on a well-trodden topic for quite a wide readership.

Joseph aims to provide 'a culturally and historically oriented view of toread' for English-speaking readers and, implicitly, to defend the corrida. A mythic approach to the corrida isintended both for the book's main title and in the system of 'heroes' references used throughout. These latter are facilitated to an extent by the name Colai but Joseph also seeks to familiarize the reader with the appeal of bullfighting as a given underpinning (its commercial potential), Josep gives some weight to the attraction of corrida for its audience.

Gabrielle Carty
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In this book Verónica Cortínez studies the Historia verdadera de la conquista de la nueva España (1528) by Bernal Díaz del Castillo, examining what makes this chronicle an odd yet widely read text, and how the Historia has been read by contemporary Latin-American writers like Carlos Fuentes. The main focus is that the literary elements of the chronicle.

In the first chapter, a Poststructural reading of the Historia (i.e., Barthès, Hayden White) allows Cortínez to focus on the characters and events configured by the narrative itself. Cortínez sees the chronicle as an obstinately, melancholic act of memory. Proper names are obsessively registered, a preoccupation that often disrupts the story itself, resembling more a requiem than a history. Bernal Díaz views Cortínez ambivalently. He is criticized for some actions, but he is also deeply admired by Bernal Díaz (57). Cortínez argues that the chronicles and accounts in the Historia reveals a double consciousness. On the one hand, there is Christian piety and affection towards certain Mexican elements: their cities, their courage in war, and their leader, Montezuma. On the other hand, there is hate and prejudice. The double consciousness scheme proposed is evidently simplistic, and it bypasses the question of the representation of the Other. At the end of the chapter, however, Cortínez rightly argues that neither vision reveals much about Mexican culture, and that both are part of a paternalistic colonial discourse (87).

The second chapter, 'Los críticos extranjeros', discusses the text's genealogy, its intended audience, and its reception. The Historia is a historical project that seems either supported by constant readership or the appeal of bullfighting as a given underpinning (its commercial potential). Josép gives some weight to the attraction of corrida for its audience.

GABRIELLE CARTY
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project. Puentes is, for Cortina, a ‘cronista mayor’ seeking to capture the experiences of the whole continent (330–31). In the story ‘Los guerilleros’ from El árbol de plata, Puentes rewrites the Historia from a different perspective, revising his earlier, more favourable view of the chronicles (291). In the Historia, Bernal Díaz claims to have planted the first orange trees in the ‘New World.’ In contrast, Puentes’ story of the first orange trees is told by a character that lived in both worlds, Jerónimo de Aguilar, the last Spanish translator that Cortés found in Yucatán. Planting these trees is a symbolic act of transculturation (279).

Overall, Cortina’s text seeks to highlight the literariness of the Historia, often comparing it with other literary works by Proust, Borges, Puentes and others. As a consequence, colonial history is pushed to the background, and the main concern is most often literariness as understood today, without questioning its colonial history. The question of knowledge and memory in colonial contexts could have been addressed as Walter Mignolo does in The Darker Side of the Renaissance (cited in a footnote). These issues, however, are approached here strictly from a Western perspective. The Historia, for example, is compared with the works of García Gómez and others but not to Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, Hernando Alvarado Tovar or the Florentine Codex. Briefly stated, although Cortina does point out important discursive elements of the sixteenth-century chronicle, the critical standpoint of manuscrito original is clearly the ciudad letrada.

LUI S F R I N D A N D O R E S T E R P O
University of Arkansas.


Born in poverty; of mixed African/Mexican descent, undocumented and never better than semi-literate; survivor of ten years of guerrilla warfare and a bullet in the lung; rising to become a national hero and populist symbol, then head of a Macedon order and President of Mexico, only to be driven from office after a few months; and after a couple of years, betrayed and kidnapped by an Italian adventurer, put up against a wall and shot by his own compatriots; and, finally, a few years later, a state of the federation named in his honour. Even in the always fascinating annals of Mexican history, there can be few more compelling tales than the life and times of Vicente Guerrero, Mexico’s first black Indian president, as Dr Vincent has entitled his study.

This is not, however, a conventional biography. It is a widely researched, often provocative, and at times debatable, study of Mexico during Guerrero’s lifetime (1785–1831). The first part of the book is largely devoted to an analysis of the socio-economic background into which he was born, with the emphasis very firmly on the significance of race and the racial prejudice to be found in both late Spanish colonial society and early decades of Mexico as an independent nation. Dr Vincent is clearly anxious partly to demonstrate the importance of the African element and its influence on the country’s political and social development. He describes in considerable detail those regions of the country where ‘the first’ was to be found, as he calls them; he tells us what they were like, skillfully recreating the world in which Guerrero was raised and lived. The future president’s early experiences—he was a mulatto—and then his rise through the ranks of the insurgent army during the long war of independence, occupy several sections. Guerrero, of course, became a national hero because of his success as a guerrilla leader and his alliance with Agustín de Iturbide, ‘that murderous individual’ in the author’s words (129), in the Plan of Iguala by which the war was in effect concluded and the end of Spanish domination confirmed. Each of the main stages of the war is explained, with the emphasis again on the part played by the mixed races until 1823, when Guerrero was the leading insurgent commander, ‘he had, nearly entirely dark-skinned army’ (114).

In the post-independence years, Guerrero’s career prospered, particularly after the formation of the populist party represented by the young yuricolos. His status as a national hero was used by perhaps more astute political activists to promote their interests, but he also seems to have sincerely shared the more radical, liberal beliefs of at least some of his allies. His rise to the top of the political tree is carefully analysed and there are good sections on the events which brought it about such as the 1828 presidential election—Guerrero lost—and the subsequent rebellion which brought him to power. Similarly, his few months in office, from April–December 1828, are examined, as are the final years after his expulsion from office until his execution in 1831.

The later sections are devoted to Guerrero’s successors in the Afro-Mexican line. One deals with Juan Álvarez, autonomous chieftain of the state of Guerrero for almost thirty years and himself briefly president in the 1850s. Most attention goes to the Rivera Palacio family into which Guerrero’s daughter, Maria Dolores, married in the same year as her father’s execution. Their son, Vicente, became one of Mexico’s leading intellectuals and historians and one chapter discusses his contribution to his country. Finally, bringing the story up-to-date, there is a chapter on Twenty-first-century Guerreroismo—largely concerns Guerrero’s legacy and the activities of his descendants.

There is no question that this is an outstanding contribution to Mexican historiography. It raises issues, especially the significance of the African cultural and biological heritage, which have previously considered. Some might find the interpretation and argument overstated and I have to admit that, after years of study of this period, I was not aware that the racial issue was of such importance. As is usual in studies of this period, there are a couple of factual errors—Gómez Farías was vice-president not president in 1833 (179); Miguel Barrancas, not Barrancas (140) and indeed. But these are minor. They do not spoil a provocative book which will be of interest to all who seek to understand Mexican history.

MICHAEL P. COSTELLO
Revue of Books.


It is hard to believe that anyone could find much original material in the well-ploughed field of Mexican nationalism. Claudio Lonnitz’s book will not revolutionize the field; his central insights are based more on a careful historical re-examination of existing theoretical interpretative schemes than the invention of new ones. Half of the essays in this book were previously published, and the book suffers to some extent from the usual problem in such collections that the essays are sometimes repetitive, do not always build on a single common theme, and are directed at different audiences. Nevertheless, his endeavour to produce ‘grounded theory’—the confrontation of theoretical ideas with historical evidence—produces some important modifications of these ideas. The result should be of interest not only to specialists in Mexico, but also cultural historians.

The general reader is probably most familiar with Lonnitz for his polemical attack on Mexican historian Enrique Krauze as an example of sloppy historical reductionism and slavishness to the modern fad for democracy. While a lively read, the article (included as a chapter) is not Lonnitz at his best. In general, Lonnitz’s treatment of the contemporary period is less thorough and more political than his reading of other historical periods. In part, this results from his method: using meticulously researched evidence to take apart the content of nationalism to locate its sources in space and time. Strands of nationalism sometimes portrayed as separate or sequential, are shown to overlap; concepts sometimes portrayed as consensual are shown to be