

**Arrom, Silvia Marina. *The Women of Mexico City, 1790-1857*. Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1985. Tables, figures and illustrations, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. Pp. vii, 384. \$47.50 (U.S.)**

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their poetry in chapter 4 which reveals both the enhancing and threatening qualities of the machine. Similar ambivalence is witnessed as yet another level in the minds of individual writers as, for example, with Brecht's reflection on Berlin and London as "impossible to live in, and impossible to leave" (p. 181).

Timms contrasts the English Georgian poets with the German Expressionists, and succinctly parallels their myth of rural England with the works of Elgar, Lutyens and Stanley Spencer (p. 125). But placement in a broader context is also relevant, for their recoil from industrialised urban centres is presaged by Augustus Welby Pugin in his 1836 publication of *Contrasts*, in the Arts and Crafts Movement of William Morris, and the architecture of Norman Shaw especially his Bedford Park project (See Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, Oxford University Press, 1980, 46, for the "Ballad of Bedford Park"). From here it is but a small step to the Garden City developments like Letchworth begun in 1904; real or unreal city?

On a general level it should be observed that footnotes are short and strictly to the point, and, where relevant, cite the most recent work on the subject. Illustrations, other than line drawings, lack contrast, while consistent references are required to works of art not illustrated, especially in Peter Collier's *Nineteenth-Century Paris: Vision and Nightmare* (chapter 2). When such pictorial references are omitted, it is hard for all but the art historian of the period to judge the relevance of the works for the argument. But these are minor shortcomings; as a whole the book must be recommended to all urban historians who wish to explore the reactions of the European avant-garde to early 20th-century cities.

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Arrom, Silvia Marina. *The Women of Mexico City, 1790-1857*. Stanford, Ca.; Stanford University Press, 1985. Tables, figures and illustrations, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. Pp. vii, 384. \$47.50 (U.S.).

The lives of women in nineteenth-century Mexico City — let alone in the secondary cities of Mexico and Latin America — have only begun to be studied. Until recently, students seeking to place Mexican women in their history have had to search through thickets of stereotypical legal and moral prescriptions or through vignettes sketched by travelers, diarists, or novelists. However grateful one is to have the views of brilliant foreigners such as France Calderon de la Barca and Alexander von Humboldt, or the realistic backdrops sketched by the Mexican novelist, José Joaquín

Fernández de Lizardi, they are insufficient to dismantle the stereotype of docile wife, mother, or nun; secluded, trivialized, and dominated by men.

In this work, Professor Arrom gives us a more complex and more satisfying portrait of the women of the New World's largest metropolis. She shades in differences of place and role by race, class, age, and civil status. She shows variations and degrees of male dominance. She indicates how larger structures of law and custom interacted with individual situations and volition. Her period, 1790-1857, straddles the last years of the colony, the era of the Independence wars, and the early years of the republic to the mature liberal era called the Reforma. This breaks with the traditional practice of dividing Mexican history between 'colonial' and 'national' periods, offering instead a perspective of continuity underlying the ephemera of political events.

The structure of Professor Arrom's book is set by her sources. An introductory chapter, "The Mobilization of Women," uses published works of the period to sketch contemporary ideas about motherhood, work, public life, and the "social utility" of women. Chapter 2, "Legal Status," is a fascinating and freshly-drawn picture of the laws relative to women. Because Mexico maintained colonial law codes more or less intact after independence, Arrom must deal with the hispanic legal framework in a broad sense. To do so she draws on material from as far back as the thirteenth century but glosses it with commentaries and criticisms of legal matters by Mexicans. Censuses and notarial records are the bases for chapters 3 and 4 dealing with "Demographic Patterns" and "Employment." Here Arrom samples manuscript census schedules of a central and a peripheral zone of the city for 1811 and 1848 to chart and compare women in the population by race, class, marital status, and place of origin. These censuses are also the basis of her discussion of the structure of the labour force by sex. Chapter 5, "Marital Relations and Divorce," is based on a sample of 81 ecclesiastical divorce files, a hitherto unmined treasure of vivid and sometimes intimate domestic detail that reveals aspects of women's experience in marriage.

The several groups of sources complement one another to give us the most complete picture yet for women in a nineteenth-century Latin American city. Accounts of the law, the mentalité of male hegemony, and generalizations sketched in from census data are fleshed out by individual voices recoverable from notarial instruments and divorce files. These latter also yield their patterns. Can the experience of women in Mexico City be assumed to apply to other Latin American cities? No, says Arrom, for its metropolitan sophistication, economic diversity, class-stratified population, and hispanic, but European-influenced, cultural values, set it apart from the rest of Mexico (and perhaps even the other major cities of Latin America), more than 90 per cent rural and strongly Indian.

In the end Arrom finds that class rather than sex largely determined a woman's chances: "... social background fragmented Mexico City women more than gender united them" (p. 152). Even though one-third of the city's labour force was female in 1811, women's work, mostly domestic service (54 per cent) and food retailing (20 per cent), was held in low repute. Jobs available to lower-class women (mostly Indians and castes, perhaps 80 per cent of all female wage labourers), were limited and considered degrading. Doing such work automatically placed a woman's 'honor' in doubt. It therefore confirmed or lowered a woman's status rather than raised it. Done to survive rather than to get ahead, work "was not a desirable alternative to marriage..." (p. 202). Women made some gains in the course of the nineteenth century as "public opinion slowly began to shift toward more egalitarian norms" (p. 258). Nevertheless, the ethos of what Arrom calls "patriarchal corporation" (p. 81) remained deeply embedded in this society. It imposed a set of assumptions that inevitably limited the freedom of women, reinforcing especially the subjection of wives to husbands, and tolerating considerable abuses of the implied compact of patriarchal benevolence.

Something like the stereotypical Latin American woman began to emerge, it seems, not in the first half of the nineteenth century, but the second. Called 'marianismo' by some, Arrom places it more broadly as a variant of the Victorian "cult of true womanhood" (p. 259-260). In Mexico City, domesticity and motherhood increasingly were sentimentalized; patriarchy gave way to the authority of the state; women were more and more viewed as different rather than inferior. But these ideals surely would not have affected the working class women that Arrom has analyzed for the earlier period.

Professor Arrom modestly calls her work an "exploratory study" (p. viii) and invites others to examine additional sources in order to revise her interpretations. One hopes that they will, but for a long time to come *The Women of Mexico City* will be the center-piece and starting point of all explorations of its subject.

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Armstrong, Warwick and T.G. McGee. *Theatres of Accumulation: Studies in Asian and Latin American Urbanization*. London and New York: Methuen, 1985. Pp. xvi, 269. Figures, tables, index. \$39.95 (cloth), \$16.96 (paper).

In spite of the fact that almost thirty years have elapsed since pioneer works edited by Philip M. Hauser on the urbanization on Asia and Latin America first aroused a seri-

ous awareness of this intriguing subject, the appearance of this volume is still timely for two reasons.<sup>1</sup> First, since the Third World represents the most rapidly developing part of the world, the growth of its urbanized societies is so complex and dramatic, particularly from the 1970s, that the necessity to update studies and surveys is acute. Second, most of the literature on urbanization in Asia and Latin America deals separately with either countries or regions; the book under review is among the first to provide an overview of the growth of the Third World City.

*Theatres of Accumulation: Studies in Asian and Latin American Urbanization* is a result of twenty years of experience and extensive research in the Third World by Warwick Armstrong and T.G. McGee, two well known scholars in the field. The book is divided into ten chapters. Chapters 1-3 are the theoretical part, in which the authors first present a critical survey and analysis of existing approaches, then state their own theoretical perspectives, which are a synthesis of these approaches. In the authors' opinion, "many theoretical approaches to the study of the urbanization process in the Third World have been less than adequate because of their failure to examine cities within the context of the operation of a world system in which international capital has been penetrating widely and deeply in response to competitive pressures and the consequent need to establish control over resources and markets" (p. 16). Their preference for a synthesis of theoretical and ideological interpretations appears to be sound and productive in dealing with the process of urbanization, which is highly complex and interdisciplinary in nature.

Armstrong and McGee see the Third World cities as 1) principal theatres of accumulation: "the central places for a process leading to an increasing concentration of financial, commercial and industrial power and decision making," and 2) "diffusers of the life-styles, customs, tastes, fashions and consumer habits of modern industrial society" (p. 41). With regard to the character of the urban system of Third World countries, the authors single out two simultaneous, but contradictory developments: convergence and divergence of urbanization patterns. Convergent forces are displayed, especially in the large cities, as a result of the impact of international corporate investment, whereas divergent forces can be observed "within Third World societies between their primate cities and their regions and rural areas" (p. 49).

Chapters 4-5 are a more empirical study of the interaction between capital accumulation and urban development in Latin America and in the developing countries of Asia. What are the main differences in the accumulation/urbanization process between the two continents? According to the authors, there are several important differences, which derive primarily from "the length of experience with international and national capital" (p. 88), and originate in the considerably diversified culture and tradition of the Asian countries (languages, different colonial regimes in the past,