



Project
MUSE[®]
Scholarly journals online

scope of Latin America. McSherry constantly reminds us that there is no point in researching and discussing Condor isolated from the past, the present, and the future.

University of San Francisco
San Francisco, California

SUSANA KAISER

Gringolandia: Mexican Identity and Perceptions of the United States. By Stephen D. Morris. Lanham, MD: Scholarly Resources Books, 2005. Pp. xv, 309. Illustrations. Tables. Bibliography. Index. \$27.95 paper.

While U.S. perceptions and images of Latin America have prompted a large body of literature, the same cannot be said of the reverse perspective. The only comprehensive account is John Reid's history *Spanish-American Images of the United States* (1977), a book limited by its very breadth. The views held, for example, in Mexico—very different from those of, say, Argentina, thousands of miles from the U.S. border and unshaped by territorial loss to the Yankee—lie half-buried amid regional generalizations and the elite perspectives that Reid privileges. Though not a history *per se*, Stephen Morris's *Gringolandia* helps to plug the gap, with a holistic approach to Mexican notions of the United States that reaches within elite spheres and beyond, considering political cartoons, cinema, school textbooks and opinion polls.

Morris explores not only how Mexicans view the United States but also how such perceptions contribute to Mexican identity and whether they have changed significantly in the post-1994 "age of NAFTA." Like Reid, Morris finds that opinion of the United States has long been characterized by mood swings that never transcend a fundamental ambivalence, and that twentieth-century Mexicanness is deeply rooted in a sense of not-being-*gringo*. In these respects, the free-trade era has seen more continuity than change: for every anti-U.S. tirade from Subcomandante Marcos or critical op-ed by Carlos Fuentes, one finds a U.S.-friendly speech by President Salinas or implicitly admiring ad from Wal-Mart. What has changed is the diminishing role of the state in molding identities. The growth of back-and-forth migration, the rise of cable TV and the flood of imported goods, along with the decline of the PRI and its revolutionary-nationalist brand of rhetoric, have opened and multiplied the ways by which Mexicans perceive their northern neighbor.

A political scientist, Morris admits that his discourse analysis approach is "somewhat ahistoric" (p. 30), and his inconsistency in tracking changes over time—an interest more evident in some chapters than others—undermines his evaluation of evolving trends. Further, he all but omits to discuss television and music, both hugely influential in the forming of self-perception. His chapter on film, which leans on Douglas Wilt's thorough dissertation about U.S. stereotypes in Mexican cinema (1930-1990), ignores most of the films of the last fifteen years that are relevant to his topic, such as *El jardín del Edén*, *Mujeres insumisas* and *Santitos*. More gravely, Morris pays too little attention to perceptions of self as forged in relation to

other countries; he conflates globalization with Americanization. From the Porfirian preference for all things French to the domination of the 1980s auto market by Volkswagen, Mexicans have long contended with a strong European presence, yet to Morris, “the U.S. [is] the only game in town” (p. 282). Whereas the revolutionaries of 1910 slaughtered many a Spanish hacienda manager, legions of their great-grandsons sport the shirts of Real Madrid and Barcelona; what does this re-embrace of Spain (not only its soccer teams, but its rock groups, magazines, even its hotel chains and banks) say about national identity?

Despite these caveats, there is much to interest historians. Almost all of the chapters afford a useful overview of specific channels of discourse and suggest paths for further research. The section on political speeches offers an analytical framework, which posits a constant tension between the rhetoric of U.S.-as-a-threat and that of U.S.-as-an-opportunity, that might well be applied to the term of any president since Benito Juárez. The chapter on school texts since 1960 finds considerable subjectivity in their treatment of the Cold War—their tone often anti-U.S. and anti-capitalist while soft on Soviet expansionism—and there’s surely a book to be written on the politics of postwar Mexican education. One could say the same of Mexican advertising, briefly but insightfully analyzed in the chapter on the consumer market. Morris is to be congratulated for the breadth of his research, including engagement with a wide and disparate secondary literature, and for the clarity of his prose. One only wishes that, having set his ambitions so high, he had cast his net a little wider.

University of Texas, Austin
Austin, Texas

ANDREW PAXMAN

To Save Her Life: Disappearance, Deliverance, and the United States in Guatemala. By Dan Saxon. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007. Pp. xxi, 306. Illustrations. Map. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$50.00 cloth; \$19.95 paper.

Numerous studies have explored the historical relationship between the United States and Guatemala, focusing much attention on U.S. acquiescence (or active collaboration) in the repressive policies of authoritarian governments. Saxon’s book contributes to this body of research. Although it lacks the theoretical sophistication of other recent studies, such as Victoria Sanford’s *Buried Secrets: Truth and Human Rights in Guatemala* (2003), Saxon’s work nevertheless deals with an important subject—the vexed politics of human rights protections in an authoritarian context.

The author examines state violence in Guatemala in the waning days of military control through the lens of a single incident: the kidnapping by state security forces of Maritza Urrutia in July 1992. That kidnapping is linked to generations of state perpetrated political violence through the story of several generations of Urrutia’s. Saxon takes his readers back and forth between the present and the past, revealing how the absence of outlets for democratic participation led three generations to become involved in oppositional politics, including armed struggle. Maritza Urru-