

CHAPTER ONE

Living the Vida Local: Contours of Everyday Life

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Caught up, since the final decades of the twentieth century, in the desire to write about those previously considered inarticulate, using various forms of “history from below” or following the twists of the cultural turn; historians of Mexico, as historians elsewhere, have given their attention to popular culture, ordinary values, and common practices. This has led them to take up, among other subjects, Judas burnings on Holy Saturday; the popular or “folk” versions of liberalism, citizenship and Catholicism; manners and morals; civic celebrations and village bands; and the spaces and places of everyday life, all as arenas of contestation and negotiation, and many increasingly inflected by the insights and methodologies informed by histories of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and national imagining. Cultural history—as much a means of professional self-definition as a coherent approach or commonly accepted set of assumptions—while fundamentally concerned with many aspects of what may be described as the quotidian and essential in providing the tools to put into question the seemingly self-evident nature of this category, cannot claim to be the only source of inspiration for the extensive concern, evidenced in both the past as well as in the present, with daily life in Mexico. As much as from cultural history, scholars continue to find in the nineteenth-century novels, travel accounts and historiographical path forged by historians in Mexico, inspiration to help shape the present configurations of the field. Perhaps it is only fitting, therefore, to begin tracing the contours of everyday life in the various forms of foundational fictions that date to the nineteenth century.

Before turning our full attention to these works, it is important to recognize that, in combining attention to everyday life with an ulterior motive, in this case didacticism, novelists were hardly unique. Travelers in the nineteenth century too, in celebrated accounts like that of Fanny Calderón de la Barca, often provide unparalleled descriptions of the everyday while simultaneously managing to make clear their abhorrence of much associated with life that was a little too daily, too associated with the lower classes, as when a *lépero* happened to intrude upon her writing. Framed variously as examples of the exotic, the picturesque, the other, or simply the bizarre, episodes of *Life in Mexico*—from the

sounds of street vendors, the architecture of haciendas, gambling houses, and humble abodes, to women's fashion, education, and manners and morals, to views of the urban landscape as well as the scourge of rural bandits—come alive in such texts. Nor can those historians of the first half of the nineteenth century, crafting out of the past histories suitable for their vision of the new nation replete with categories like “the people,” the “masses,” and “citizens” that they hoped to bring into existence with their narratives, be exempted from the charge of marshaling evidence from everyday life in support of their politics. Indeed, how could it have been otherwise? It might be worth reminding ourselves at this point that all texts, whether novels, travel account or histories written from archival sources, pose problems not only in teasing out the contours of everyday life but also in constructing, often in very different ways, what is even meant by that term.

Writers of novels in nineteenth-century Mexico, beginning, not coincidentally, with the formation of the nation itself, took as some of their main subject matter the description of local customs, seeing in them both the epitome of what was original and particularly Mexican as well as the raw material out of which suitable national beings might be molded. Two novels, together spanning the course of the nineteenth century, bracket the epoch of *costumbrismo*, that genre of writing concerned with custom and everyday life as a means both of expressing place and forging national character. The first, *El Periquillo Sarniento* or *The Mangy Parrot*, written by José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, appeared in 1816 during the revolution for independence and was published in installments at the rate of two chapters per week. It gathered conveniently in one location many of the themes that would become dear to the hearts of those intent on teaching through the rhetoric of moral reform. The qualities they desired in citizens of the nineteenth century included a Manichean vision of the world divided between virtue and vice; a commitment to utility or usefulness as measured by a constant preoccupation with being productive, finding a trade, and not ending up a burden to society by becoming yet another *letrado* (lawyer); and the admonition that people be judged by their acts and deeds, that is to say, by their internal qualities rather than by external signs or trappings such as clothes or manners, their social status or position. *El Periquillo* is, nevertheless, resolutely focused on the low, the customs of the streets as well as the argot of gamblers, criminals, highwaymen, and the poor, in short, the everyday. Accompanying *El Periquillo* on his journey through Mexico and its customs and even to the Philippines, as well as from rogue to respectability, readers, in addition to learning about food, drink, habits, manners (ill and otherwise), and conviviality, receive an education in such things as mourning customs, household inventories, gaming practices, the legal system including life in prison, various occupations, the abuses inflicted by the Church on indigenous participants in Holy Week celebrations, and the shortcomings of contemporary institutions of education.

So popular was *El Periquillo* that the book was reprinted a number of times through the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s, incorporating at first engravings, and then, beginning in 1842 and subsequently, a new form of representing daily life: the lithograph. In fact, as María Esther Pérez Salas shows in *Costumbrismo y litografía en México: Un Nuevo modo de ver* (2005), *costumbrismo* was one of the most important genres for integrating text and image, thus reinforcing visually the romanticism, nationalism, and, at times, the didacticism and morality of literary texts. In the case of *El Periquillo*, lithographers turned their attention to graphically interpreting the action and events that Fernández de Lizardi had crafted with his prose, especially those critical moments in the book having to do with fights between men and the fainting of women, along with the duels, dinners, and

dangers, all the while managing, she concludes, to maintain with the illustrations the same high quality as found in the narrative itself.

A form of visual national imagining that came to prominence in the first half of the nineteenth century, lithography built on colonial precedents like *casta* painting and the sculpting of wax figurines while drawing from contemporary transnational artistic and literary currents associated with romanticism and *costumbrismo* in France, Spain, and elsewhere. A close relationship between lithography and national themes and imagery developed in the 1840s, reaching its most compelling expression in *El Museo Mexicano*, a literary magazine published by Ignacio Cumplido and directed by Manuel Payno and Guillermo Prieto, especially in this periodical's attention to the portrayal of "national types" and customs (to which we return later in this chapter). Attention to "types," usually tradespeople, servants, street vendors, and other figures that had been elaborated in various artistic forms during the colonial period, or were the subject of travelers' accounts, or both, became an important subgenre of *costumbrismo*, leading to the publication, in installments beginning in 1854, of *Los mexicanos pintados por sí mismos*, an illustrated and textual portrait of 35 "types," beginning with "El Aguador," ("The Watercarrier") a fixture of life in Mexico City at that time, and also featuring "La China," a female figure whose manner of dress would evolve, as we will see, into the symbol of Mexico itself. Although idealized, romanticized, even some times exoticized and eroticized, while at other times sanitized or invested with nostalgia, such images, always framed within the dominant discourses of ethnicity, gender, and class of the time, provided visual testimony to the country's uniqueness within a well-established genre of representation shared by many nations, while at the same time offering glimpses of everyday clothing, food, and drink; the tools of various trades; the setting, whether it be urban or rural; and of the tastes and proclivities of their bearers.

Helping to imbue *costumbrismo* with its nationalist hues and an early contributor to the development of the subgenre of "national types," Manuel Payno worked closely with lithographers as early as the 1840s to elaborate such figures as the Aguador (noting the importance of this figure to daily life not only as the deliverer of water but also in controlling the animal population, serving as a source of information on the availability of servants and wet nurses, and helping amorous couples by delivering their love letters). Payno wrote *Los bandidos del Río Frío*, the novel that, for some, serves as the endpoint of *costumbrismo* as a genre. A pot-boiler that kept people on the edge of their seats waiting for more; an imaginative yarn based on true crimes and real events in the history of the republic; a foundational fiction whose characters knit Mexicans together both through their common speech, customs, and habits and in their movements across the length and breadth of the country; and a meditation on past and future by means of an insistent focus on inheritance, birthright, destiny and fate, both of the characters that trample across its pages as well as of the country they inhabit, *Los bandidos*, published in monthly installments in periodicals as it was written between 1889 and 1891, lends itself to many readings. Whichever interpretation one prefers, the novel is, as Anne Staples has argued, second to none as a source of information on customs, the intimate life of families, geographical descriptions, domestic relations, political life, and the character and habits of a broad range of social groups, in short, on nineteenth-century *vida cotidiana* (Staples, 2001).

Payno also continues to develop his earlier interest in "types" that we have seen dating to the lithographs and literary periodicals of the 1840s and 1850s. The novel is, in fact, set in this earlier period, taking up the actual operation of a criminal ring by a certain Colonel Yáñez, a high-ranking official during the time of Santa Ana. That the novel

draws on actual figures and real events from the nation's past has, in part, been responsible for its allure to historians, who have both written about the novel as "virtually true" or as a form of "parahistory" and, in at least one instance, found it a long-term source of fascination in attempting to identify its characters with the "real-life" figures to whom they correspond. Such "real" or, at least potentially real, figures also come, under Payno's direction, to embody not only unique characteristics that typify the region from which they come but also, simultaneously, through the alchemy of metonymy, to bring into being that very region. The chapter in the novel discussing the yearly trade fair at San Juan de los Lagos is particularly revealing in this regard. After enumerating the products from which various regions are known—prized mules from Tamaulipas, sheep with thick white wool from New Mexico, sweet potato candies from Querétaro, among others—Payno turns his attention to the traits, qualities, and characteristics as well as to regional markers like clothing that distinguish the women who dared to make this trip. Here, a woman of the northern frontier, skin white as alabaster with abundant black hair, dressed in a tight-fitting blue suit that reached to her collar, came face to face with, among others, a stout china *poblana*, bedecked in double or triple petticoats with *rebozo* on her shoulders and her arms bare, the first composed and cool and the latter more lively and zestful, two of many regional types on display. So avowedly were they the essence of a particular place, as well as its most compelling representation, they seemed, according to Payno, to be from different and distant countries, as removed from each other as Paris from Berlin, yet fashioning through the bringing together of these unique parts, the single whole of the nation.

It is precisely this description of the fair at San Juan de los Lagos that Guadalupe Monroy draws upon to write her contribution to the *Historia Moderna de Mexico*, the multi-volume work published in the 1950s that served to reestablish history as a modern discipline in Mexico. In "Compensatory Pastimes" a section in the third volume dealing with the Restored Republic, Monroy has no interest in contributing to a discussion of "types," but rather in setting out the range of diversions available to various publics, from the glory of the theatre during the empire of Maximilian to the popular big tops (*carpas*), seamy theatres (*teatruchos*), circuses, and puppet shows of Mexico City and the local fairs of the countryside during the 1860s and 1870s. In these popular urban locales, she argues, the broader public—comprised of poor and working people—took great pleasure in such things as the rhyming verses (*décimas*) that clowns would direct at women, mothers-in-law, social vices, to those unhappily married, and even at politicians. In the smaller towns of the countryside, like that of San Juan de los Lagos, the arrival of a fair would, as in the great opera *Sonámbula*—performed by Angela Peralta the "Mexican songbird," that captivated more cultivated audiences of that time—lead to an awakening "as if from a deep sleep," thus providing a small consolation for the daily monotony of work in the mines or fields.

In the themes its contributors took up, as well as in the approaches they adopted, the *Historia Moderna de México* built on the previous work of the *costumbristas* and others in the nineteenth century while pointing toward the future by setting out much of the research agenda of those both in Mexico and abroad that subsequently became interested in cultural history and daily life. As discussed by Daniel Cosío Villegas, general editor of the work, in the forewords to the various volumes written in the mid-1950s, the *Historia Moderna* was envisioned as a six-volume work, three each on the Restored Republic and Porfiriato, with each of the three organized around political life, economic life, and the social life of their respective period. Cosío Villegas pointed not only to the

lack of attention that had been paid to the Restored Republic but also to the general decay of interest in history in general, a consequence of the Revolution and the resulting need to focus on urgent national problems in the present and the immediate future. Seeking to rewrite the still-dominant Porfirian narrative that saw nothing but chaos before Díaz arrived to impose order and progress, Cosío Villegas positioned the Restored Republic instead as an era of transition between the formative years and what he referred to as the “ordered” and ultimately “funereal” regime of the Porfiriato. As for that later epoch, its defining characteristic was that of “individualization,” that is, the replacement of the shapeless and static mass of the group or class with the emergence of the individual—isolated, particular, and with his or her own will—no longer simply a part of some larger entity.

Resulting, in part, from the spread of the means of mass communication, the individual was both brought into being through, as well as being the consumer of, new forms of writing, one of the techniques of which was adopted by Emma Cosío Villegas in her contribution to the volume in this collection on the Restored Republic entitled “Daily Life.” Moving through the spaces of the city taking in all encompassed by her gaze, much like *cronistas* such as Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera in the burgeoning press and their works of fiction, Emma Cosío Villegas describes the traditional plates of delicious home cooking and then follows families from their breakfasts to their strolls in the morning air in the Alameda. Her chapter—divided into sections dealing with life outdoors; house, food, and store; *paseos*, civic festivals, and restaurants; dances; and Holy Week and religious festivals—chronicles such things as courtship practices, accomplished through the strategic use of *rebozos* and *sombreros*, popular decorations and preparations by which means people made official celebrations their own, and the emergence of the particularly national female figure of the *china*, “brown-skinned, with dreamy eyes, red mouth, fresh and sensual, flexible and well formed in body, lover of independence and wholesome in every sense,” the proud expression of which was her traditional attire.

Although the subsequent volume of the *Historia Moderna* dealing with the Porfiriato does not have a section on daily life, the third part of that work, entitled, in Spanish, “Moral Social” (Social Well-Being), takes up many of these same themes. In sections on “Friendship and Love,” “The Sin,” and “Penitence,” gender is introduced into history and added to the discussion of daily life, as in the description of the proper attributes of a *señorita decente*, including, along with skills in artificial flower arrangement and training in drawing and piano, competence in household tasks, the ability to comply with the principles rites of Catholicism, and being “fashionable.” Women’s work, including prostitution, is also considered, as is the increase in abduction (*rapto*) as a means of accomplishing the formation of couples, all as part of a broader discussion of what the author characterizes as the growing crisis of decency (*pudor*) during the era. Nor is masculinity overlooked as a subject of study, with attention paid to duels, bandits, and criminality all within a context that considered what it meant to be “*muy hombre*.” A subsequent section of the volume, Part Five, entitled “The Leisure Hours,” focuses on sports and the circus, bullfights, opera and good music, and, of course, the frivolous genre, especially puppets, including the company associated with the famous Rosete Aranda family, described as “the most popular spectacle, and, of course, the most genuinely national one.”

Along with including specific sections dealing with daily life, the *Historia Moderna* also featured the work of a historian whose subsequent writing, focusing resolutely on the local and everyday, did much to establish microhistory as a field of inquiry not only

in Mexico but also more generally. Luis González y González, in his extensive contributions to the volume on the Restored Republic, sketched out the broad parameters framing the entire study, beginning with a consideration of the relationship between Man and the Earth, in the first part of the volume, followed by a discussion in parts two and three, respectively, first of the indigenous subsoil and subsequently the social scale, with emphasis on *campesinos* and the urban proletariat. Some of the themes treated in these sections included the effects of the land on the people and the identification of four principal elements influencing life in more urban areas, those of the market, the church, the town hall (*casa municipal*), and the gathering of abodes into groups or communities. As for life in the countryside, *campesinos*, according to González y González, recognized three places as their own—the particular locality where they had been born, the colonial past, and the world beyond the grave. Distinct from structures in the cities, the cabins of the poor, Catholic churches, and the big houses of the haciendas organized human life.

Many of these themes were further elaborated in his later works, perhaps the best known of which, to both Spanish- and English-speaking readers, is *Pueblo en vilo* (*San José de Gracia*, in English) published in 1968. Here the intimate relationship between nature and human life continues to predominate, leading González y González to focus on such things as the mountainous landscape, isolation, weather and other annual cycles, and the prominence of a snowstorm and a volcanic eruption in defining the meaning of life for entire generations. He documented the impact of the arrival of the market economy and money, and the founding of a town that not only had an impact on the daily lives of *rancheros* and the everyday work carried out by women (and on masculine prerogatives), but also contributed to the rise of political passions. Change over time in this community was not only associated with natural events but was also marked generationally as well as by class. As put into practice by this author, microhistory not only narrates the local and everyday for its own sake, but uses them as tonics to nationalist narratives and histories, decentering such official formulations by seeing such events as the Revolution, in one example, as an outside imposition rather than an event shared equally throughout the nation to which different generations had distinct reactions. In a similar fashion, the author views the Cristero Revolt, that did not figure prominently in the historiography of the time, as a response to the violation of deeply held beliefs and daily practices.

In the last section of his book, concerned with the 25 years of change preceding its publication, González y González delivers on the promise of microhistory, making apparent the close intertwining of everyday life with the broader structural and economic changes underway in the community. While framing the narrative as one of increasing class conflict, with the upper crust pitted against the underdogs, out-migration, and acculturation or modernization both of selves and homes—captured pithily in his assertion that people were beginning to be “offended by the odor of armpits,” (p. 233)—the analytical punch of these categories comes from the close attention to the everyday. “Class,” for example, as much an economic category expressed in relationship to ownership of land, is experienced in gendered terms, including the diminution of patriarchy and the improvement in the conditions of women—manifested in changing attitudes and practices concerning love including the decline of female abduction or raptó, work, birth-control, education, and power within the family. All of these practices and divisions are mediated through language, especially proverbs and sayings, to which González y González pays considerable attention, as have many cultural historians subsequently. New forms of mass communication, especially radio and television, also figure as variables

in their own right, leading people to become more interested in watching *Cantinflas* than seeing the rare appearance of a Bishop in their community. Both a history of changes in everyday life and their expression through language and mass mediation, as well as an argument about the “transition” (nearly completed, according to the author) in class relations, gender, modernity, and feelings of national belonging, *Pueblo en vilo* both disrupts national narratives and establishes daily life as essential to an analysis of power.

If the “transition” to more uniform versions of modernity and national identity had almost been completed in San José de Gracia by the late 1960s, the relationship between everyday life and nation building has continued to occupy historians to the present day. In fact, under the impetus provided by the linguistic turn, with its concomitant shift from social to cultural history of various inflections including a growing interest in the discursive construction of gender, race, sexuality, national and other identities, the interest has grown, even as the category of the “everyday” has taken on new meanings and been asked to shoulder different and at times even contradictory analytical burdens. More than the local details that belie the national narrative of the official history, the everyday, in the hands of some, has been seen as a powerful location for creativity and critique, through practices like the folk humor of derisive *décimas* of the big top discussed above, where the official portrayal of the world can be teased out for inspection and modified or found wanting and new perspectives and even language itself can be generated. At the same time, others have returned to the themes of daily life set out by those contributing to the *Historia Moderna*, finding in the foods, fiestas, and fandangos the stuff of the national. While, at times, the predominant concern has been with the role of official celebrations and ceremonies in imagining the nation, others have found in everyday habits, routines, and ways of being the embodiment of the national.

In his work on the relationship between cuisine and the formation of national identity, Jeffrey Pilcher samples both everyday fare as well as festive, even patriotic, dishes. Whereas in *!Que Vivan Los Tamales!: Food and the Making of Mexican Identity* (1998), he explores the forging of a national cuisine through cookbooks published in the nineteenth century, as well as the blending of elite and popular tastes and the inclusion of regional dishes in what he refers to as the “revolutionary culinary nationalism” of the twentieth, in *The Sausage Rebellion: Public Health, Private Enterprise, and Meat in Mexico City, 1890–1917* (2006), he charts the struggle of shoppers to preserve their access to freshly slaughtered meat in the face of changing technology and business practices. Whether concerned with *puros frijoles*, an everyday mainstay, or *chitos* with *salsa borracha*, the festive food consumed by the poor on saint days—especially that associated with the Virgen de Guadalupe on December 12—or *mole poblano*—Mexico’s national dish—Pilcher attends not only to shared tastes but also to differences in access to food imposed by class, gender, and ethnicity. He highlights a new analytical category, that of the consumer, an identity that is at the center of the recent work of Steven Bunker. In *Creating Mexican Consumer Culture in the Age of Porfirio Diaz* (forthcoming), Bunker explores the cultures of consumption, their relationship to modernity, its spectacles and discourses, and how individuals and groups utilized these cultures to construct individual and group identities to situate themselves and others in the rapidly changing context of daily life in turn-of-the-century Mexico. John Lear too has seen in consumption demands an important component in the mobilization of working people in revolutionary Mexico City, where women workers especially established links between work and community.

Perhaps no single historian has been more central in exploring the relationship between everyday life and national imagining and in setting the research agenda in this

field, through his own publications, the co-editing of work with other scholars, as well as in the training of graduate students (having supervised some 27 doctoral dissertations at last count, including those of both Jeffrey Pilcher and Steven Bunker mentioned in the previous paragraph), than William H. Beezley. In *Judas at the Jockey Club and other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico*, one of the pioneering works in Mexican cultural history published in 1987, “traditional” Mexico and those imbued with the Porfirian persuasion—that ethos of modernization taken up by many of the elite—confront each other in a number of everyday venues, including the bull ring, at sporting events, at work, and in longstanding celebrations like the Judas burnings from which the book takes its title. Seeing in travelers’ accounts a means of accessing descriptions of everyday life, such as food, clothing, housing, celebrations, and family arrangements that those living in the society often took for granted and therefore often failed to remark upon, Beezley finds in such activities—in addition to a great deal of merriment—potent zones of meaning making, identity formation, and, especially, social critique. While the Judas burnings sponsored by the Jockey Club on Holy Saturday in 1893 had taken the form but not the spirit of the carnivalesque, those of 1908 in one of the capital’s more popular and plebeian neighborhoods certainly brought into being a world that was substantially more topsy-turvy, mocking the aging dictator and his policies through the burning of richly symbolic figures like a devil, a wild boar, and a billy-goat. If this potential for a world turned upside-down was seen as fast dwindling in the face of encroaching modernization, a growing body of literature, inspired in large part by Beezley’s work, has taken two parallel approaches. One, stressing precisely the opposite, finds the political in the popular almost everywhere, while engaging with, modifying, and critiquing the terms within which the discussion of culture and everyday life takes place. The other, seeing power as only one among several interpretive possibilities, finds in the everyday a broad popular repertoire that people might draw from to imbue the ordinary events of their lives with drama, color, and excitement.

Two compilations of collected essays, both published in 1994, attested to the gusto with which the cultural turn was being taken, establishing the popular and the mundane as central to discussions of power and meaning while reconceptualizing the political itself as inextricably enmeshed with everyday life. In *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance*, co-edited by William H. Beezley, Cheryl E. Martin, and William E. French, lewd songs and dances, workplace practices, life on the street, theater and other performances, and village bands, among other activities, all become targets of the moralizing and disciplinary efforts of church officials, factory owners, municipal regulators, police, and national policymakers. A common theme linking the ceremonial and more everyday rituals, comprising one of the major concerns of those contributing to the volume, is their centrality as performances that assert and contest power. As the field of possible sites for constituting and contesting identities, meanings, and power expanded, seemingly without limit, in the work of those contributing to *Rituals* and others, so too was power itself coming to be seen in the everyday construction of gender, sexuality, race, and national belonging.

Nowhere was this more apparent than in the essays gathered in *Everyday Forms of State Formation*, co-edited by Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent, also published that same year. Reworking understandings of hegemony and utilizing the insights of theorists such as James Scott, on the one hand, and Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer as developed in *The Great Arch*—their work on English state formation as cultural revolution—on the other hand, contributors to this volume probed ways to conceptualize the relationship

between popular culture and the national regime; seeing “the state” less as a thing and more manifested in categories, ideas, and subjectivities working from within, with the ways the world was made sense of at the level of the everyday.

Contributing to this emphasis on the constructed character of such analytical concepts as subjectivity, as well as helping to provoke a reconsideration of some of the categories taken up by historians interested in the popular and the everyday, approaches associated with the history of gender and sexuality began influencing the debates in cultural history at this time. Discussed extensively in a number of other venues (as in the 1999 Special Edition of the *Hispanic American Historical Review* dedicated to the New Cultural History), the work of gender historians from the early 1990s helped emphasize the contentious nature of many aspects of daily life, seeing culture as “argument” rather than as fixed or universal, with gender rights, patriarchy, and honor, among other things, actively contested rather than fixed in stone, and intimately enmeshed in any discussion of power. As Ana María Alonso argued in *Thread of Blood: Colonialism, Revolution and Gender on Mexico’s Northern Frontier* (1995), it was necessary to move beyond a focus on institutional or formal politics to pay attention to the “politics of everyday life,” to the effects of this power on bodies and selves in order to understand resistance, her topic of study. In my book, *A Peaceful and Working People*, published the following year, contestation over everyday habits of work, manners, and morals comprised the practices upon which the framework for rule was both asserted as well as measured and found wanting. In these works, as in many others, previously coherent and bounded categories like “culture” came under stress while the quotidian became the site where power was played out, in struggles over bodies and selves, in the imaginings of genders, ethnicities, sexualities, and national and other identities. In the Introduction to *Gender, Sexuality and Power in Latin American since Independence* (2007), Katherine Bliss and I take stock of much of this literature, seeking to explain what has been at stake in this writing as well as the ways in which the questions it has generated have become central to almost any analysis of history.

Since the mid-1990s, “everyday life” as an analytical category or focus has helped to shape the contours of a veritable whirlwind of historical writing, work that both continues to draw upon and develop the insights of historians of gender with conceptualizing power, and those of popular culture with understanding meaning-making, social critique, and personal agency, and that extends these insights into new areas of study and in new directions. In *Fragments of a Golden Age*, an important edited collection published in 2001, editors Gilbert Joseph, Anne Rubenstein, and Eric Zolov and their contributors not only usher in post-1940 Mexico as a field of historical study but do so by showing how the numerous “contradictions and nuances” embedded within the daily life of the period, seen in such activities and forms of mediation as mass consumption, tourism, illustrated magazines, movies, wrestling, rock and the televisual, together accrete a critical mass sufficient to topple the familiar narrative through which the post-1940 period had heretofore been explained. The volume builds on, as it highlights, the contributions made by those individual historians involved in the project, including those of Rubenstein and Zolov who, in *Bad Language, Naked Ladies and Other Threats to the Nation* (1998) and *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture* (1999), chart, respectively, the role of comic books and rock and roll in daily life and in shaping understandings of modernity, citizenship, gender, mass mediation, and identity. Their work, alongside that of a number of others gathered in the volume, including Jeffrey Pilcher, Alex Saragoza, Seth Fein, Steven J. Bachelor, and Mary Kay Vaughan, as in their

own publications, convincingly establishes the increasingly transnational context within which such daily lives were and are being lived. Arguably the most important new direction is that the nation state is no longer presumed as the unquestioned unit of analysis nor as the undisputed framework for the writing of history.

If the transnational offered one new conceptual framework within which to situate daily life, the everyday also proved instrumental in the creation of new sub-genres of historical writing and in breathing new life into already established ones. In the realm of political history, for example, concern with formal institutions and practices has given way to a more expansive definition of what constitutes the political with the inclusion of culture and the everyday as part of any discussion of power and the state. In *Peasants, Politics and the Formation of Mexico's National State: Guerrero, 1800–1857* (1996), Peter Guardino places peasants at the center of state formation and struggles over the definition of the state in the early nineteenth century. Jeffrey Rubin attempted to do just that the following year, in *Decentering the Regime: Ethnicity, Radicalism and Democracy in Juchitán, Mexico* (1997). That is, he tried to decenter the regime as well as the existing historiography written about it by linking everyday experiences of work, family, gender, and ethnicity, with all their ambiguities and contradictions, with politics and social movements, especially the rise of Coalición Obrera, Campesina, Estudiantil del Istmo (COCEI) in Juchitán, Oaxaca. That same year, Mary Kay Vaughan's *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants and Schools in Mexico, 1930–1940* (1997) stressed the negotiations between state and local actors over the meaning of such things as nation, modernity, citizenship, and history as a means of decentering—if we might borrow Rubin's term—the concept of state itself. Likewise, Adrian Bantjes in *As If Jesus Walked on Earth: Cardenismo, Sonora and the Mexican Revolution* (1998) stresses not only the centrality of negotiation between local and national actors, but also the diversity and extent of local participation in a politics premised upon everyday ethnic, regional, and religious considerations.

Explorations of popular devotion have been at the center of a revival of interest in the history of religion and popular religiosity. Here, the work of Paul Vanderwood has been pioneering, both in its choice of subject matter as well as in the manner of its presentation. In *The Power of God Against the Guns of Government: Religious Upheaval in Mexico at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century* (1998), Vanderwood situates the Tomóchic revolt of 1891 within the context of religious revivalism and millenarian revolt swirling around the figure of Santa Teresa de Cabora and everyday life in Porfirian Chihuahua. With colloquial language, invented dialogue, and evocative detail, the author not only attempts to capture a flavor of the times and place, but does so in a language more attuned to the contemporary vernacular or everyday. In a subsequent work, *Juan Soldado: Rapist, Murderer, Martyr, Saint* (2004), Vanderwood returns to the terrain of popular belief, this time in order to understand how a “despicable criminal” can become a “revered saint” (p. 200). Here he stresses the creative and continuing reinvention of the cult of devotion around this figure, full of personal touches and rooted in local circumstances, drawing not only on personal testimony but also on the experience of his own visit to Cemetery Number One in Tijuana in the year 2000 on June 24, the day in which the largest number of devotees come to pay their respects. This same creative recombination of already existing aspects of everyday Catholic practice and local structures of belief and organization is also apparent in the founding of lay devotional movements in rural Oaxaca during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Edward Wright-Rios shows in *Revolutions in Mexican Catholicism: Reform and Revelation in Oaxaca, 1887–1934*

(2009), it was precisely this grounding in existing liturgies, traditions, vocabularies, pilgrimages, healing based on images, and organizational structures associated with *mayordomías* that enabled one such movement, that associated with the Lord of the Wounds in Tlaxcohalco, to endure when others—like that around La Virgen de Ixpantepec whose appearance in a grotto to a young Chatina seer, Dionisia (or Nicha), led her to be referred to as the second Juan Diego—did not. In both cases, the central role of a leading female figure allows Wright-Rios to also explore the construction of what he refers to as “female pious agency.” All recent work owes a debt to Pamela Voekel who, in *Alone Before God: The Religious Origins of Modernity in Mexico*, anticipates the recognition of the centrality of religion to culture and the everyday.

The history of crime and criminality is also being rewritten, drawing new attention to both everyday practices and contexts as well as to the discursive construction of both crime and criminals. In her work, most notably *Crimen y castigo* (2002), Elisa Speckman offers not only a history of changes in criminal legislation and its implementation between 1872 and 1910 but also a close look at the literary portrayal of criminals, of the increasingly pervasive practice of turning crime into text for the diverse and growing publics being written into existence by those contributing to the dailies, penny press, broadsheets, and flyers. Robert Buffington also highlights the work accomplished by the discursive division of Mexicans into criminals and citizens in his aptly named work, *Criminal and Citizen in Modern Mexico* (2000), stressing the centrality of constructions of race and gender to the process of national imagining. Likewise, in *City of Suspects* (2001), and in his contribution to *Crime and Punishment in Latin America*, edited by Ricardo Salvatore, Carlos Aguirre, and Gilbert M. Joseph and published that same year, Pablo Piccato directs his gaze toward the daily lives of the urban masses, seeing not only everyday life but also the perspectives of the popular classes as essential to the discursive construction of crime and criminality. It was as if, as James A. Garza states in *The Imagined Underworld* (2007), crime and order needed each other.

Inhabitants of Mexico City (and readers everywhere) have also been fortunate in having as their champion in print a historian who has found in detective fiction a powerful genre for ventilating official narratives, while writing the city itself, along with its more popular residents, into existence as historical actors and agents in their own right. Featuring the hard-boiled, one-eyed, Basque-Irish-Mexican detective Hector Belascoarán Shayne, author Paco Ignacio Taibo II, in novels like *Cosa fácil*, originally published in Spanish in the 1970s but more recently available in English, engages with many manifestations of the popular, the language and slang of *chilangos*, their foods and pastimes, with wrestling, *mariachis* and the media; finding in late night radio, for example, a means of forging a community of people who are empowered to act as subjects in their own lives rather than to exist as victims of corruption, crime, or the chaos of the modern city.

No single author has been more important in giving expression to such rituals of chaos, or been more influential in interpreting their history, than Carlos Monsiváis. Chronicler, commentator, columnist, cultural historian, and co-conspirator, Monsiváis has for more than 50 years written extensively for radio, magazines, daily newspapers, and periodicals; contributed essays and introductions to the work of others; and authored a series of books touching on subjects that cover the gamut of everyday life, ranging from Porfirian poetry to live sex shows in contemporary Mexico City, not only paying careful attention to the various genres of representation—be they letters (*El género epistolar: Un homenaje a manera de carta abierta*, 1991), poetry, boleros, radio, cinema, melodrama, or telenovelas (*Escenas de pudor y livianidad*, 1981)—but also crafting one

of his own by means of his column in *Proceso* through combining various “voices” in a single text to offer devastating critiques of the iterations of the powerful or, at least, those who presume to be. Although daily life is caught up in almost all of Monsiváis’s writing (and vice versa), his recent study of a movie idol, seemingly so far from the everyday in its preoccupation with the fantasy world portrayed on the big screen, nevertheless offers insights essential to understanding the relationship between modes of representation and the reality they simultaneously reflected and brought into being. In *Pedro Infante: Las leyes del querer* (2008), Monsiváis turns his focus to the “Golden Age” of cinema, more than 30 years of movie production following the nation’s first “talkie” filmed in 1932, seeing in this outpouring not only a source of information on the everyday—the profound as well as superficial beliefs of these decades, including modes of living, manners of speech, notions of beauty and of vulgarity, such as humorous sexual innuendo—but also the creation of a vigorous popular culture, the adoption of melodrama, and the framing of a visual panorama of the nation as a single entity, one not based on laws, politics, Catholic morality, or History, but one that emerged from the collective enthusiasm for what Monsiváis identifies as the visual and aural fantasy that contained landscapes, customs, modes of speaking, dress, and traditional attitudes that in some way recalled those of Mexico. For the purposes of this chapter, what Monsiváis illustrates is how the categories of “the people,” “the public,” and, perhaps, by logical extension, “the everyday,” are themselves nothing other than inventions or constructions, part of a *México filmico* in which “the people” imitated the “hallucinations and chimeras emitted in its name, and the fantasies reproduced the behavior of its imitators” (p. 76), all the while marrying commercial success with a sentimental nationalism premised upon idealized visions of family, morality, and gender roles.

Indeed, it is not by accident that Monsiváis has been a major contributor to new publications on the history of gender and sexuality, much of it concerned with the everyday. His chapter in *The Famous 41: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico, 1901* (2003), co-edited by Robert McKee Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan, and Michelle Rocío Nasser, reflects on the paucity of knowledge about gay life in Porfirian Mexico as well as on the politics linking past and present persecution of homosexuality. In fact, most of the contributors to the volume concern themselves specifically with the discursive production of various kinds of knowledge about sexuality. Robert Buffington’s chapter on homophobia and the working class stands out in this regard, as well as the chapter by Cristina Rivera-Garza on doctors and inmates of the General Insane Asylum, La Castañeda, during the late Porfiriato. Here, Rivera-Garza builds on her earlier dissertation and novel *Nadie me verá llorar* (1999), translated as *No One Will See Me Cry* (2003), in which the voices of prostitutes and those considered insane fully participate in the creation of medicalized discourses about themselves and their bodies. Her work highlights the fragility of these dominant discourses while revealing the everyday to be not so much how things really were but as contradictory, contested, and discursively constructed. The same attention to the body as a site of debate, contestation, and performance characterizes Gabriela Cano’s contribution to *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico* (2006), edited by Jocelyn Olcott, Mary Kay Vaughan, and Gabriela Cano (with the Foreword by Carlos Monsiváis). Here, Cano offers the poignant example of Amelio Robles, a transgender individual whose construction of a masculine body image and social identity with the cultural resources at hand was subsequently co-opted in the service of discourses stressing the importance of women to the Revolution. In this case, the “everyday” is not so much a site or a place, but the cultural resources that can be

brought to bear in order to “perform” gender and sexuality, or, as was the case after Amelio’s death, to appropriate such performances and re-inscribe them within dominant paradigms.

Contributors to *Sex in Revolution* have also been among those at the forefront of writing the history of women through the lens of everyday life. This has partly been the result of the insight articulated by Joanne Hershfield in *Imagining la Chica Moderna: Women, Nation and Visual Culture in Mexico, 1917–1936* (2008), that is, that the burden of everyday life has seemed to weigh particularly heavily on women. Drawing from extensive interviews and oral histories, Heather Fowler-Salamini offers a grassroots perspective on the gendered process of working-class formation in the coffee export industry in revolutionary Veracruz. Rejecting their portrayal in the pejorative terms of stereotypical constructions of femininity, female coffee sorters used their own narratives to stress their honor as well as their work ethic, locating respectability in their simultaneous roles as good wives and mothers as well as sustainers of their families. Also in this volume, Kristina A. Boylan and Jocelyn Olcott write, respectively, on Catholic women’s activism and women’s political mobilization in the wake of the Revolution, especially around the issue of suffrage and the representations this generated. This forms part of a broader project of exploring women’s activism and the gendered nature of revolutionary citizenship set out in Olcott’s book, *Revolutionary Women in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (2005). Women’s multiple responses to the Revolution as well as what this process may have meant to them has also been considered in *The Women’s Revolution in Mexico, 1910–1953*, (2007), edited by Stephanie Mitchell and Patience Schell. Another author stressing the reciprocal relationship between material, everyday realities, and the discursive representation of working women is Susie Porter, who, in *Working Women in Mexico City: Public Discourses and Material Conditions, 1879–1931* (2003) explores the impact of industrialization and revolution on women, women’s work, and constructions of gender.

Drawing from the insights of these works on the history of women, as well as from those on the history of the family, one strand of recent writing has focused attention on the emergence of new discursive categories, such as that of the adolescent, and taken up the question of the history of children and childhood directly. Ann S. Blum, in *Domestic Economies: Family, Work, and Welfare in Mexico City, 1884–1943* (2009), finds in social reproduction—which she defines as the “creation, sustenance and socialization of new generations”—a means of bringing together a number of approaches to the history of women, family, gender, medicine, public health, and labor that scholars like Katherine E. Bliss in *Compromised Positions* (2001) and Claudia Agostoni in *Monuments of Progress* (2003) have helped pioneer. Such a concept also provides Blum with a way of bringing everyday life and the multitude of changing discourses swirling around childhood and the family into the same analytical framework. She draws on sources generated by a wide variety of institutions and organizations, including the Casa de Niños Expósitos, the Hospicio de Niños, and Mexico City’s juvenile court, to show not only how the contested and controversial concept of the “revolutionary family”—premised as it was on traditional gendered divisions of labor as well as a class-based hierarchy of work within the household—became central to imagining modern national identity, but also the ways in which such constructions clashed with popular understandings and practices concerning work, childhood, and the family, especially the essential expectation that labor would figure centrally in the construction of family bonds. The family is also prominent in Ana Lidia García Peña’s, *El fracaso del amor: Género e individualismo en el siglo XIX mexicano*

(2006), a work concerned with the gendered consequences of the liberal campaign to create modern individuals, one that resulted in an increase in everyday violence against women as well as their juridical marginalization. As with much of the recent literature, the book is attentive to language—to discourses of gender, the individual, the family, and to the rhetorical construction of victimhood, seduction, and masculine honor—as well to the contestation of these tropes and the mobilization of such language by men and women of the time in pursuit of their own ends.

While *costumbrista* novelists and lithographers of the nineteenth century found in the contours of everyday life the “types” out of which a national identity might be crafted, the relationship between popular forms of expression—the people’s foods, fairs, and fandangos—and national imagining has continued to draw the attention of scholars of the past up to the present. Perhaps no one more so than Ricardo Pérez Montfort, whose numerous essays on popular expressions and cultural stereotypes, gathered in several books published over the last 20 years, have helped set the agenda for research in this area. Defined as a contested term, as a series of representations, values, and characteristics identified through spoken language, music, in dress as well as food, in productive as well as leisure activities, a stereotype can be both generated and adopted by the group producing it on the one hand, or imposed as a form of hegemony linked to state power and forms of mass mediation on the other. As Pérez Montfort shows, the relationship between the two forms has a history, one which, as he traces, led to the emergence, or even invention, in the 1920s and 1930s, of the *charro* and the *china poblana* dancing the *jarabe tapatío* as the dominant representations of Mexicanness from among a great many possible regional figures, the result of the political discourse of the time, along with the interactions of various elite and popular actors as mediated first through popular theater and then, more importantly, through film. Along the way, readers of his work not only learn a great deal about popular celebrations, foods, music, and representations from which such stereotypes were drawn, but also come to see everyday life as a form of politics with popular groups as actors in their own right, agents in the generation and shaping of such things as vernacular nationalism.

Perhaps no single activity was more important in making such folktypes or stock characters known across the country than the public performance of puppets, one of the principal preoccupations of William H. Beezley in *Mexican National Identity: Memory, Innuendo, and Popular Culture* (2008). Eschewing formal theory and embracing a good story (as is generally his wont), Beezley focuses on the popular and the performative—puppets, almanacs, children’s games, lottery cards, independence celebrations—to ground in the “small deeds, rumors, and everyday matters” the stuff of national identity formation. In many ways, the book fulfills the promise of the earlier literature on rituals and celebrations of national imagining discussed above, this time by insisting that the local, the popular, the personal, in short the everyday, provided the repertoire, the images, the melodrama, and the memories for the emergence of a broadly shared national identity, one often at odds with the standardized and generic version promoted by the nation’s elites. In the popular version, Beezley argues, images and performances functioned as mnemonic devices that recreated specific acts in specific places in the past, while actual individuals, such as Hidalgo, stood in metonymically in these shows for the people, their hopes, their dramas, and their experiences, in this joining of present and past, of national memory and identity. So visceral is this history that readers can almost taste the multicolored corn tortillas impressed with the national seal—such a part of Independence celebrations—touch the wooden press that produced them, hear Vale

Coyote, perhaps the nineteenth-century's most famous puppet *cantinflear* in his well-known discourse on this same event, or recall, upon seeing "el árbol de la noche triste," an image from one version of the lottery game, whatever one cared to from the repertoire of representations it called forth.

Corn, the tortilla press, and the lottery game are all objects that form part of the material culture of daily life, one of the main concerns of those contributing to a multivolume series on the history of daily life in Mexico recently published by El Colegio de México. Under the direction of Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru, the series' editor, the *Historia de la vida cotidiana en México*, over the course of five volumes published between 2004 and 2006, moves chronologically from the prehispanic to the end of the twentieth century and thematically from a concern with material culture to a consideration, in the final volume on the twentieth century, of normative values and attitudes through an engagement with the mass mediated images, especially photographs, that frame everyday life. The fourth book in the series, *Bienes y vivencias. El siglo XIX*, edited by Anne Staples, brings together contributors interested in various aspects of daily life taking place throughout the republic, from hygiene in Mérida (Raquel Barceló) to fiestas in Querétaro (Juan Ricardo Jiménez Gómez), from the social spaces of textile factories in Puebla and Tlaxcala (Coralía Gutierrez Alvarez) to divorce in Nuevo León (Sonia Calderoni Bonleux). Concern with the role of specific objects in material culture characterizes many of these contributions, thus situating them simultaneously within both an established historiography on material life—perhaps most powerfully articulated by Fernand Braudel in his book the *The Structures of Everyday Life*, with its emphasis on food, fashion, housing, and the pervasive repetitiveness of things that are barely noticed as they constitute the everyday—and a renewed interest, as evidenced by Beezley above, in the ways people use things or material objects to make and communicate meaning, desire, and memory in the past (see the recent discussion in the *American Historical Review* [December, 2009] on "Historians and the Study of Material Culture"). Indeed, as Marie Eileen Francois, a contributor to *Bienes y vivencias*, explains in her own recently-published book, *A Culture of Everyday Credit: Housekeeping, Pawnbroking, and Governance in Mexico City, 1750–1920* (2006), just as Braudel established the links between capitalism and material culture, liberalism and the growth of the republican state in Mexico were interwoven with material culture. Her study of pawning enables her to see not only how women of distinct social classes managed, by means of maneuvering within the culture of everyday credit, social reproduction at all levels of society, but also how the role of the state changed over time, returning, by the revolution, to one that had animated it at over a hundred years earlier—that of aiming to guarantee popular access to credit.

Staples also situates the volume within the broader trajectory of Mexican historiography, specifically that established by both the *Historia Moderna de México* and the micro-history of Luis González y González discussed above. Like the latter, *Bienes y vivencias* seeks to present many histories rather than the one history of the official narrative while, like the former, Staples finds in everyday life evidence of the emergence of a new construct, not the individual freed from the routines and constraints of larger collectives but, through changes in material culture, the integration of daily life with the new concept of belonging to a national community. The volume is also united by a common preoccupation with sources, specifically focused on the question of the relationship between genres of writing and representations of the everyday. In her chapter, for example, Staples interrogates the assumptions that shaped the narratives of those historians writing in the first

half of the nineteenth century, assumptions that led them to a focus on what they hoped to see and a studied avoidance of what was being lived out on a daily basis before their very eyes. In another chapter, Leticia Mayer and Cristina Mayer probe the relationship between the novel and reality as it pertains to representations of crime in Durango. In yet another, Jesús Gómez Serrano explores what he refers to as the “cosmopolitan provincialism” of Aguascalientes, at times expressed in the poetry of Lopez Velarde and others, where the embrace of “progress” nevertheless failed to change the quaint provincialism of that city. Finally, Arturo Aguilar Ochoa finds, in one of the most important presses—that of Ignacio Cumplido in Mexico City during the first half of the nineteenth century—a world of work suspended between tradition and modernity as well as the daily circumstances under which publishing took place.

The concern with narrative modes of representing daily life moves from the wings in *Bienes y vivencias* to take center stage in the final book in the series comprising the *Historia de la vida cotidiana en Mexico*. Divided into two volumes edited by Aurelio de los Reyes, *Siglo XX, Campo y ciudad* and *Siglo XX, La imagen, ¿espejo de la vida?*, the final book is the product of its times—born from one of the means of mass communication: print—its chapters are organized with many others of them in mind, taking as their focus the press, radio, cinema and television, with archives, oral histories, images, film, and photographs not only as their sources but their subjects as well. Moreover, de los Reyes is adamant not only as to the centrality of cinema and the image in portraying daily life in the twentieth century (much like the novel was in the nineteenth) but also about the book’s ability to be apprehended in a cinematographic manner. Although many readings are possible, he declares, each chapter an image or snapshot in its own right, when read in sequence splice together the movement of daily life across the twentieth century for our visual consumption. As if to punctuate de los Reyes’ insight, numerous images are scattered through each chapter, some—as in chapters on daily life in popular neighborhoods during the Porfiriato by Elisa Speckman and on rural peasant life during the revolution under Zapata by Felipe Arturo Avila Espinosa—to illustrate conclusions that have been drawn from sources such as judicial archives and oral history testimonies. Others—as in the case of the portrayal of the social life of the elite between 1920 and 1940 in newspaper social pages by Maria del Carmen Collado Herrera, or that dealing with primary school textbooks written in indigenous languages (for the tzeltal of Chiapas, the tarahumara of Chihuahua, and the nahuatl of Guerrero), mostly in the 1990s, by Cecilia Greaves L., or that on the cartoons or comic strips (historietas) of the first half of the twentieth century by Thelma Camacho Morfin—serve as the sources from which to draw conclusions concerning daily life. Subsequent chapters, like that of Alberto del Castillo Troncoso, deal with images of childhood at the beginning of the century and the volume culminates in two photo-essays, one by Rebeca Monroy Nasr on photographs of everyday scenes revolving around various aspects of education after the revolution, and another, by Maricela González Cruz Manjarrez, on photojournalism in the Mexico City between 1940 and 1960.

Taking seriously the images in this last-mentioned photo-essay as the objects of study proves particularly rewarding, as they provide the viewer with access not only to multiple, often overlooked or even hidden, histories drawn from daily life, but also suggest how dominant visual discourses might cause such images to be read in certain ways. The images of photojournalist Nacho López utilized by Cruz Manjarrez in this chapter, for example, deploy a perspective that is highly critical of dominant institutions and power, taken as they are from the photo essay “Only the Poor Go to

Hell,” shot in police stations and published in the illustrated magazine *Siempre* of June, 1954. In his extensive treatment of this photographer in *Nacho López: Mexican Photographer* (2003), John Mraz argued adamantly that the strength of López’s work comes from his treatment of the poor, the dispossessed, the downtrodden as subjects, that is, as social actors in their own right and as agents in the creation of their own worlds, rather than as victims of their circumstances. By analyzing these images within the discursive contexts in which they were produced, Mraz proves able to reveal the criticism of the police, of ideas of justice, of the class system, that they implied. Such images, and others generated by portrait and other photographers with increasing regularity, have also been seen as constitutive of identity as well as critical of official representations of the world. In his book, *Visions of the Emerald City: Modernity, Tradition and the Formation of Porfirian Oaxaca, Mexico* (2006) and in his contributions to *De Oficios y otros menesteres: Imágenes de la vida cotidiana en la ciudad de Oaxaca* (2005), a book accompanied by a DVD of images of from Oaxaca’s archives, Mark Overmyer-Velázquez argues that photographs, even those concerned with regulating and fixing identities, provided a means for Oaxaca City’s inhabitants to imagine themselves as modern citizens and as active participants in the making of their world and to construct their own, multiple, images of modernity and their places within it. Taken together, these works illustrate not only how photographic images provide a lens, no matter how refracted, on daily life, but also on how such images came to form part of the contours of the everyday.

Finally, as few things are more common a part of everyday life than death, the extensive literature on this subject serves as an appropriate way to draw the present discussion to a close. Much of it will not be considered here, dealing as it does with a debate over the supposed essence of national character. Still, given the many ways that death has been mobilized as part of the national imaginary over the last two hundred years as well as the close association of the country itself within the global context with death, especially the celebration of Days of the Dead, it is not surprising that deathways, attitudes toward death, and the politics of death continue to command scholarly attention. In a forthcoming work on state funerals during the Porfiriato, Matthew Esposito in *Funerals, Festivals, and Cultural Politics in Porfirian Mexico* (2010), examines the creation of mindscapes and memoryscapes, and the centrality of memorialization and the commemoration of the dead to rule and statecraft in the late nineteenth century. Others, especially Anne Rubenstein, have found in the public rituals of mourning associated with the death of famous figures like Pedro Infante the making of political spectacle. Amanda López, in her recent dissertation “The Cadaverous City: The Everyday Life of the Dead in Mexico City, 1875–1930,” provides the first ever examination of the everyday experience of death and dying in the capital city. In his provocative book, *Death and the Idea of Mexico* (2005), Claudio Lomnitz eschews the literature debating “lo mexicano” as well as that which sees in the political appropriation of death yet another invented tradition. Although both the state and popular culture (and, perhaps, by extension, “everyday life”) figure prominently in his work, such categories are not reified and already formed before the fact, but are fluid and acted upon. In fact, Lomnitz’s main goal is to show how the cultural construction of death shaped both the state and popular culture. In the process of doing so, Lomnitz illustrates how such things as the Days of the Dead, for example, moved from Church control, to popular celebration that resisted the modern Liberal regimes in the nineteenth century, to an officially promoted ritual of national identification in the twentieth. As with Lomnitz’s other work, especially

the essays in *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico: An Anthropology of Nationalism* (2001), one of his main contributions is conceptual, especially in putting categories like popular culture and everyday life into question. This tactic has also yielded valuable results when used with other heretofore commonly accepted categories. Christopher Boyer, for example, has premised his book *Becoming Campesinos* (2003) on showing how the meaning of *campesino* emerged out of the interaction of agrarian militancy and revolutionary ideologies of the 1920s and 1930s.

We have taken quite a jump in moving from nineteenth-century *costumbrista* literature to recent writing on the formation of cultural stereotypes, to increasing preoccupation with images, the visual, and the discursive production of the everyday through new means of mass communication, often in transnational contexts, in more recent times. Surveying this trajectory, one can conclude that, from being pressed into service by members of the lettered city to help forge the nation—that is, as part of an official history in the nineteenth century—focus on everyday life in the twentieth has often been seen, in however negotiated and contested a fashion, as precisely the opposite; as a means of finding in the ordinary and the mundane an antidote not only to the official national programs but also to an emphasis on institutions, great men, and impersonal forces as the most important agents of historical change. Influenced as well by a historiography that increasingly views “culture” as an argument and that has been ever-more concerned with bodies, selves, and subjectivities, the coherence implied by the term “everyday life” has given way to a conceptualization of the everyday as contradictory, contested, and discursively produced, that is, with the constructed character of the category itself. The influence of historiographical trajectories in Mexico continues to help shape writing in the present, especially in the renewed emphasis on material culture and the use of objects to communicate meaning, desire, and memory, and in the attention to the relationship between genres of writing and the representation of the everyday. While influenced by broad currents that have swept across historiographies in many parts of the world, especially the impact of British Marxist historians from the 1950s and 1960s, as well as those associated with the Annales school, the history of mentalities, and the cultural turn, writing on everyday life in Mexico has taken place within a very particular context, one in which popular participation in revolution has shaped the political agenda in profound ways, both in terms of popular demands for change as well as in the manner in which the claims to rule and political legitimacy, often in the name of “the people,” have been expressed. If, as Michel de Certeau suggests in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, dominant discourses must be seen as part of the strategies of rule while everyday life serves as the tactics, the literature on everyday life demands that attention be paid to the specifics of both as well as to the relationship between the two.

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