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*Constitutive Visions: Indigeneity and Commonplaces of
National Identity in Republican Ecuador* by Christa J. Olson
(review)

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not sure the result is comprehensible to a readership not familiar with these linguistic registers. Also, the title is a bit unfortunate because it does not reflect the sophisticated level of scholarship this author offers here.

The time period Nouwen chose to study, the first three decades of the twentieth century, was one of great change for the city of Buenos Aires, with a vast influx of immigrants from Italy, Spain, and other parts of Europe. This book focuses on Ashkenazi Jews who arrived from Central and Eastern Europe. It includes vivid reconstructions of personal experiences that allow the reader a glimpse into the daily life of Argentine Jews at the time. The author builds a cultural map using Yiddish periodicals, literary and humorous magazines, cartoons, plays, police blotters, and personal papers, among other sources. Her analysis of Yiddish plays that focus on the Argentine experience serves as a radiographic image of the daily life and concerns of members of the porteño Jewish community at the time. In fact, the entire book reads like a glossary of Jewish life in Argentina in the early twentieth century.

But this book's discussions are not limited to Jews but rather aim at recreating the social fabric of the emerging *porteño* identity in urban spaces like the mixed and overpopulated immigrant dwellings known as *conventillos*. Looking at the cohabitation of different immigrant groups creates a context for Jewish life of the time. One of the unique ways in which Nouwen brings this coexistence to life is through the senses, as in her description of the mixed smells of *asado*, cigarettes, and apples in the conventillos. She also looks at the ways food and drink were advertised in periodicals as evidence of cultural bridges built by Jews in the marketplace. She describes the social life of Jews, other immigrants, and *criollos* at cafés, dance halls, and picnics to show how the three groups crossed paths. She also traces the lives of Jews through crime locations, using police blotters. Finally, she discusses how integration varied by generation and gender.

This book stands out from other publications on immigration and Argentine national identity because of Nouwen's use of innovative approaches and sources to portray the interaction of Jewish immigrants with *criollos* and with other immigrants during this vibrant time period. She does an excellent job of glossing Jewish life in Argentina in the early twentieth century. This book is a pleasure to read whether you are an expert in the fields of Latin American history, Jewish studies, sociology, or cultural studies, or new to them.

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Constitutive Visions: Indigeneity and Commonplaces of National Identity in Republican Ecuador. By Christa J. Olson. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014. Pp. xxv, 238. Figures. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$64.95 cloth.
doi:[10.1017/tam.2014.28](https://doi.org/10.1017/tam.2014.28)

Christa Olson's book contributes significant insights to the topic of national identity studies. By expanding the scope of rhetorical theory to incorporate visual sources,

the author identifies parallels and symbioses across traditionally separate academic disciplines. One of the many strengths of the book is Olson's analysis of multiple types of textual and visual sources, including works of art, illustrations, petitions, proclamations, articles, and essays. The book focuses on the period between the mid nineteenth and the mid-twentieth century, and successfully traces both continuity and change over that extended period to identify historical patterns. Given its interdisciplinary approach and theoretical rigor, the book makes contributions along the way to various fields of inquiry including visual culture studies, Latin American studies, rhetorical and cultural studies, art history, and others.

The book is organized thematically rather than chronologically, with each of the five chapters presenting a couplet of case studies or 'visual commonplaces' stemming from the long history under consideration. Olson proposes that the repetition of the familiar or commonplace over time is not necessarily a sign of stagnation, but rather that these commonplaces serve a generative purpose and gradually shape the national consciousness. The text is shaped by various questions, including how national identities come into being and sustain themselves, how citizens and social entities influence their government through visual and rhetorical means, and the relationship of indigeneity to the coherence of the nation-state.

Chapter 1 takes up the issue of Ecuadorian citizenship and the role of indigenous peoples in society. After introducing the various revisions to the Ecuadorian constitution, Olson looks into the "constitutions-behind-the-Constitution," in other words the paintings, poems, and prints that gave credence to the constitution in the national imaginary. Employing examples from the artistic trends known collectively as *costumbrismo* in the nineteenth century and *indigenismo* in the twentieth, she examines how these movements, while distinct in motivation and presentation, made indigenous peoples visible to the middle class, thereby providing a justification for social authority. The following chapter, titled "Geography as History," looks at assumptions about the relationship of indigenous peoples to the land in the context of nation-building, which by definition demanded that national territories be cultivated, used, and mapped. Through a close analysis of romantic landscape painting alongside reported cases of indigenous resistance, Olson demonstrates how the land-indigeneity topos was simultaneously flexible and enduring, providing both white-mestizos and indigenous peoples a foundation for articulating claims to land. Chapter 3, "Burdens of Nation," turns to the issue of indigenous labor, once again through an examination of costumbrista and indigenista images. The nation-state depended on indigenous labor to modernize, but it failed to incorporate indigenous people into what was being built. The contradiction is manifested in the visual production of the time.

The next chapter focuses on the theme of indigenous exteriority within the nation-state, in other words, "internal otherness." Through an astute analysis of photographs of public spaces and indigenous subjects, Olson reveals how these images address issues of order and beauty, and representation and responsibility. The final chapter takes up the topic of performing indigeneity, examining cases in which white-mestizo's adopted the role of indigenous peoples as a means to articulate local problems and claim their own

legitimacy in a nation defined by its indigenous population. Olson deems this strategic appropriation a form of rhetorical imperialism that simultaneously reinforced divisions and claimed identification.

Olson's book provides a unique approach to the analysis of national identity formation in Ecuador. Her rigorous analysis of visual sources, the diversity of her selection, the sophisticated interpretation of these sources, and her interdisciplinary methodology provide a new interpretive framework for this material. However, while *Constitutive Visions* makes significant contributions to studies of the formation of Ecuadorian nationhood, it lacks selected comparisons with how this process manifested itself in other nations. Such comparisons would have strengthened the case for Ecuadorian singularity, or better situated this history within a broader continental process of identity formation. Another factor that hindered Olson's argument at times was the mention in text of several paintings or illustrations that were not included, making it difficult for the reader to assess the image as evidence. Finally, while the extension of rhetorical theory to the visual field is a laudable exercise and expands the interpretations of the images examined, the theoretical jargon employed in the analysis is at times so dense and discipline-specific that it is difficult to make sense of the argument. The density of the language may present an impediment to employing the text in undergraduate courses, especially outside the field of rhetorical studies.

Despite these minor criticisms, the book makes a unique interpretation of the frequently debated topic of national identity formation, adding significantly to our understanding of the contradictions and intricacies of this process.

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"We Are Now the True Spaniards." Sovereignty, Revolution, Independence, and the Emergence of the Federal Republic of Mexico, 1808–1824. By Jaime E. Rodríguez O. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012. Pp. 520. Pictures. Tables. Maps. Notes. Index. \$70.00, cloth.
doi:[10.1017/tam.2014.29](https://doi.org/10.1017/tam.2014.29)

It has always seemed that Mexico achieved its independence under somewhat mysterious circumstances. After a much-studied insurgency had failed by 1815, the country magically became independent in 1821, under the direction of an ex-royalist officer who had previously captured one of the major leaders of the insurgency, who was then executed. How did this happen?

Fortunately, Jaime E. Rodríguez O. has written a seminal book in which he explains the mystery. Rodríguez's atypical formation partly accounts for his ability to understand what transpired during the years between 1808 and 1824. Neither American nor Mexican, he is Ecuadorian by birth. That anomaly explains how he is able to approach